

The Synagogue as Locus of Ministry in Luke-Acts: A Socio-Historical Study of Luke 4:16-30

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Declaration

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Abstract

This study focused on three interrelated matters. The first is the synagogue as an ancient institution, the second is Luke's depiction of the synagogue as a locale for ministry in Luke-Acts and the third is the pivotal role Luke 4:16-30 plays in Luke's depiction of Jesus' ministry.

The synagogue is one of the most important institutions of antiquity in that it was not only central to Judaism, but also left indelible marks on both Christianity and Islam. The gospel writers provide us with some information on how the synagogue as an institution played an important role in Jesus' life and ministry. It is also clear that attending the services of the synagogue was customary for both Paul and Jesus and that for both of them it served as an important locale for their teaching and preaching.

An overview of recent studies indicated that there are new approaches to the origin of the synagogue that covers its spatial, liturgical, non-liturgical and institutional aspect. While reference was made to all four aspects of the synagogue, attention was given primarily to the non-liturgical aspect of the synagogue, which focusses on the religio-political life of the people.

The study of the origin and function of the synagogue has shown that it is shrouded in mystery and may never be fully known. However, the synagogue was clearly a well-known institution in both Palestine and in the Diaspora in the 1st century and the intertestamental period. The survey of the origin of the synagogue indicated that it addressed the religious, social and political needs of the people.

The study also undertook a survey of the synagogue in the New Testament which revealed that the New Testament understanding of the synagogue aligned with the practices of the ancient synagogue. However, some functions of the ancient synagogue as analysed are not found in the New Testament while others that are mentioned in the New Testament are not found in the ancient synagogue. This indicates just how contextual the function of the synagogue was.

A description of the socio-historical context of Luke-Acts as well as how it is structured as a literary work, was also considered. In terms of the literary structure of Luke-Acts, the research determined that it is legitimate to treat them together; and that the synagogue is a key aspect in both.

The synagogue in Luke-Acts was also considered. It is clear that both Jesus and Paul used the synagogue as a locale for preaching the message of the Kingdom. The study has also shown that the role of the synagogue described in both Luke and Acts aligns with the rules of the synagogue as discussed in Chapter Two, but that not all the roles discussed in the ancient synagogue are replicated in Luke. The socio-historical study of the synagogue in Luke-Acts, and particularly Luke 4:16-30, showed that the beneficiaries of Jesus' message were the socially and economically disadvantaged people in his society.

In the conclusion the results of the study were briefly applied to Nigeria where poverty has ravaged the lives of many people. The study indicated that Jesus wanted to reform the synagogue as a religio-political institution to again fulfil its role in addressing the needs of its community. The Nigerian church needs to replicate this. However, while the Nigerian churches operate similarly to association synagogues, the need is to implement Jesus' strategy of transforming public synagogues. Thus, an ecumenical approach is needed to affectively address the needs of the faith communities Nigeria.

Opsomming

In hierdie studie word aandag geskenk aan drie onderling verwante sake. Die eerste is die sinagoge as 'n antieke instelling, die tweede is Lukas se uitbeelding van die sinagoge as 'n plek vir bediening in Lukas-Handelinge, en die derde is die deurslaggewende rol wat Lukas 4:16-30 speel in Lukas se uitbeelding van Jesus se bediening.

Die sinagoge is een van die belangrikste antieke instellings deurdat dit nie net sentraal in Judaïsme was nie, maar ook 'n duidelike invloed op sowel die Christendom as die Islam gelaat het. Die verskillende evangelieskrywers bied belangrike inligting oor hoe die sinagoge as instelling 'n belangrike rol in Jesus se lewe en bediening gespeel het. Dit is ook duidelik dat die bywoning van die dienste in die sinagoge vir Paulus sowel as Jesus gebruiklik was, en dat dit vir albei as 'n belangrike plek vir lering en prediking gedien het.

Die oorsig van onlangse studies het aangedui dat daar nuwe benaderings is tot die oorsprong van die sinagoge wat ruimtelike, liturgiese, nie-liturgiese en institusionele aspekte dek. Terwyl daar na al vier aspekte van die sinagoge in die studie verwys is, is daar hoofsaaklik aandag gegee aan die nie-liturgiese aspek van die sinagoge, wat fokus op die godsdienstig-politieke lewe van die Jode.

Die studie van die oorsprong en funksie van die sinagoge het getoon dat dit grootliks onbekend is en nooit volledig uitgeklaar sal kan word nie. Die sinagoge was egter duidelik in die 1ste eeu en die intertestamentêre periode 'n bekende instelling in Palestina, sowel as in die Diaspora. Die oorsig van die oorsprong van die sinagoge het aangedui dat dit die godsdienstige, sosiale en politieke behoeftes van die Jode aanspreek het.

Die studie het ook die sinagoge in die Nuwe Testament ondersoek, wat aandui dat die Nuwe Testamentiese verstaan van die sinagoge ooreenstem met die gebruike van die antieke sinagoge. Sommige funksies van die antieke sinagoge word egter nie in die Nuwe Testament aangetref nie, terwyl ander wat in die Nuwe Testament genoem word, weer nie van die antieke sinagoge bekend is nie. Die verskille dui aan hoe kontekstueel die funksie van die sinagoge was.

'n Beskrywing van die sosio-historiese konteks van Lukas-Handelinge asook hoe dit as 'n literêre werk gestruktureer is, is ook oorweeg. Wat die literêre struktuur van Lukas-Handelinge

betref, het die navorsing bepaal dat dit wenslik is om dit saam te behandel; en dat die sinagoge 'n belangrike tema in albei is.

Die voorkoms van die sinagoge in Lukas-Handelinge is ook bestudeer. Dit is duidelik dat beide Jesus en Paulus die sinagoge as 'n plek gebruik het om die boodskap van die koninkryk te verkondig. Die studie het ook getoon dat die rol van die sinagoge wat in beide Lukas en Handelinge beskryf word, ooreenstem met die reëls van die sinagoge soos bespreek in Hoofstuk Twee, maar dat nie al die rolle wat in die antieke sinagoge bespreek is, in Lukas gerepliseer word nie. Die sosio-historiese studie van die sinagoge in Lukas-Handeling, en veral in Lukas 4:16-30, het getoon dat die ontvangers van Jesus se boodskap die sosiaal en ekonomies benadeelde mense in sy samelewing was.

Ten slotte is die resultate van die studie toegepas op Nigerië, waar armoede die lewens van baie mense verwoes. Die studie het aangedui dat Jesus die sinagoge as 'n godsdienstig-politieke instelling wou hervorm om weer die rol te vervul om in die behoeftes van die gemeenskap te voldoen. Dit moet ook die strategie van die Nigeriese kerk wees. Alhoewel die Nigeriese kerke soortgelyk aan assosiasie-sinagoges funksioneer, is dit nodig om Jesus se strategie om openbare sinagoges te transformeer, te implementeer deur 'n ekumeniese benadering te volg om effektief die behoeftes van geloofsgemeenskappe in Nigerië aan te spreek.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated firstly to God Almighty, for his provision and for enabling me to complete this research. I also dedicate it to my beloved late Father, whose desire to see me acquire education could not die with him. I also dedicate this dissertation to my beloved, caring and understanding wife, Helen D. Silas, and to my lovely children, Marvellous (Yyakazah), Wisdom (Kazahmi) and Nelson (Shimkazah) D. Silas, for their love, concern, sacrifice, prayers and moral support and to all the members of the First African Church Kurmin-Zonkwa, and its sons and daughters in diaspora.

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List of abbreviations

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| <i>Antiq</i> | <i>Antiquitates Judaicae</i> |
| <i>AP</i> | <i>Contra Apionem</i> |
| <i>BCE</i> | <i>Before Common Era</i> |
| <i>Bell Jud</i> | <i>De bello Judaico</i> |
| <i>CE</i> | <i>Common Era</i> |
| <i>JBL</i> | <i>Journal of Biblical Studies</i> |
| <i>JSNT</i> | <i>Journal for the Society of New Testament</i> |
| <i>JSOT</i> | <i>Journal for the Society of Old Testament</i> |
| <i>KJV</i> | <i>King James Version</i> |
| <i>Legat</i> | <i>Legatio ad Gaium</i> |
| <i>LXX</i> | <i>Septuagint</i> |
| <i>Macc</i> | <i>Maccabees</i> |
| <i>NIV</i> | <i>New International Version</i> |
| <i>NTS</i> | <i>New Testament Studies</i> |
| <i>Pro</i> | <i>De Providentia</i> |
| <i>Prob</i> | <i>Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit</i> |
| <i>Spec Leg</i> | <i>De specialibus legibus</i> |
| <i>Vit Mos</i> | <i>De vita Mosis</i> |

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Chapter One – *Introduction*

1.1 Research focus and key terminology

The synagogue was one of the most important social institutions of antiquity in that it was not only central to Judaism, but also left indelible marks on both Christianity and Islam (Griffith 1987:150; Levine 2005:1; Horsley 1996:131). It was especially important during the Hellenistic and the Greco-Roman period in both Palestine and the Diaspora in that it served as a locale in which the Jews expressed their piety and identity and served as a house of meeting, prayer, school, court and locale for other social services (Harding 2003:289).

Harding (2003:289) notes how Acts, Philo¹, Josephus,² Greco-Romans writers and inscriptions testify to the presence of synagogues in both Palestine and Diaspora and that they were often partially accessible to non-Jews. In an account of the existence of the synagogue in Alexandria around 38 CE, Philo (Legat 20.132) remarks on how numerous and widespread the synagogues were in every section of the city. It appears that the synagogue was considered the primary

¹ Philo was a 1st-century Hellenistic Jewish philosopher who influenced early Christian theology and biblical interpretation. His birthdate is uncertain, but he is known to have been chosen by the Jews to present their complaints before Caligula around 40 CE (Hiebert 2009b:874-875). Philo testifies to the presence of many synagogues in various cities of Egypt (Legat 132-139). He claims that the synagogues originated around 262 BCE in Alexandria in Egypt: "From ten kings or more who reigned in order, for three hundred years [i.e. 260 BCE] never once did one king have an image or statue of themselves erected in any one of our many synagogues in each district of our cities in Egypt" (Legat 121-124; 132-139).

² Josephus was a 1st-century Jewish writer who is an important source of information concerning Jewish history during the intertestamental and New Testament period. Josephus was born in Jerusalem around 37 CE. His father was a priest and his mother a descendant of the Hasmonean royal house. He was also a Pharisees (Stone 2009:791). Josephus testifies to how widespread synagogues were in both Palestine and the Diaspora (Antiq 19.281-285). He, for example, mentions how the Jews in Asia wrote letters complaining to Augustus about how they were maltreated and their money stolen from the synagogues. Letters were written in response to representatives in Ephesus, Sardis, Sidon, Phoenicia, Delos, Sardis, Cos, Miletus and Pergamum (Antiq 14.183-267; 16.157-178) to protect the rights of the Jews which included the right to gather on the Sabbath for worship. Josephus also mentions that there was a synagogue in Caesarea in which the Jews gathered on the Sabbath for worship (Bell Jud 11.284-289).

institution of the Jewish community in Alexandria (Schwartz 2009:17). Both Griffith (1987:2) and Schwartz (2009:17) note how archaeological and epigraphic records testify to the widespread existence of synagogues in Egypt around the 3rd century BCE. This situation was not unique to Egypt; in antiquity synagogues were found almost everywhere across the Mediterranean world.

In the New Testament, the main literary focus of this research, the gospel writers all testify to the important role of the synagogue in Jesus' life and ministry (Mk 3:1-7; Matt 4:23; Lk 4:14-15, 43-44, Jn 18:20).³ It appears that it was Jesus' custom to attend the services of various synagogues, which served as an important locale for both his teaching and preaching (Dunn 2006:221-222; Ryan 2016:1). In Acts 17:1-2 Paul is also said to have attended a synagogue which he used as a platform for preaching the message of Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the of the Old Testament. His converts from the Jews, proselytes and God-fearing gentiles also seem to have been largely drawn from various synagogues.

It is the goal of this dissertation to investigate the synagogue in Luke–Acts as a locale for ministry. This investigation of the synagogue as an important locale in which part of the early church's ministry occurred, is due to its importance as an institution for Jewish social, political and religious⁴ activities in Galilee and Judea around the late Second Temple period (Runesson 2013:903; Ryan 2016:1) as well as it being a locale for the ministry of both Jesus and Paul in Luke-Acts. While Jesus' engagement with various synagogues will be scrutinised, Jesus' ministry in Luke 4:16-30 will receive particular attention. The focus on the synagogue as locale for ministry in Acts will furthermore primarily be on Paul's interaction with the synagogue. In both Luke and Acts the focus will thus be on the interaction of the main protagonist of the respective books with the synagogue.

³ Ryan (2016:2) in his recent study makes a case that the synagogue as an institution was an important aspect of the historical Jesus' social, religious and cultural identity. Thus, according to him, the link between the synagogue and Jesus is not the creation of the different gospel writers but rather the reflection of the historical situation during the life of the historical Jesus.

⁴ While religion had a broader meaning in ancient times, the use of the term "religious" here refers to the teaching and reading of Scripture in the synagogue.

1.1.1 Key terminology

It should firstly be noted that the reference to “the” synagogue in the title of this study refers to the synagogue as an institution and not to a particular synagogue unless a reference is made to the synagogue in a particular place, for example, the synagogue in Nazareth or Capernaum. Louw and Nida (1988:233) and Danker (2000:963) understand the Greek noun συναγωγή as referring to an “assembly” or “congregation” of Jews, but also to a “place” in which they held their meetings. It is important to keep these two possible meanings of συναγωγή in mind since while the KJV, for example, uses the word “synagogue” in Ps 74:8, and the RSV refers to a “meeting place” (thus understanding it as a translation of the Hebrew מוֹעֵד (*moed*), the LXX often uses συναγωγή to refer to the gathering of Israel⁵ and to a building or place (see 3.1). This study agrees with Charlesworth (2006:18) that a reference to a synagogue can simply refer to a gathering of the Jewish community, but that it may also refer to a structure in which the they gathered.

In this dissertation the term “ministry” is understood as the actions of the members of the community of the early Christ followers, which addressed the spiritual, social and material needs of their community. It does not necessarily refer to organised ministries, or presume a fixed task with elected functionaries, as, for example, is mentioned in Acts 6:1-6.

“Locale” refers to the notion that the synagogue, either as a designated building or as a gathering of the community in an undesignated building, served as the institution which initiated and coordinated the ministry of the congregation. Locale is thus understood as either a physical space in a designated building or a social group that assembled for particular functions in a multi-purpose space in which ministry took place. This understanding is in line with the use of the Greek noun συναγωγή, as indicated above, which can refer to an assembly of Jews for worship or unified action, or to the place where such a meeting is held (Feinberg 1996:1142).

⁵ The Hebrew equivalent of this meaning is הַקְנֶסֶת (*hakneset*), which refers to a gathering of people, or things, for any purpose.

1.1.2 Research focus

This study will attend to three interrelated matters. The first is the synagogue as an ancient institution, the second is Luke's depiction of the synagogue as a locale for ministry in Luke-Acts and the third is the pivotal role Luke 4:16-30 plays in Luke's depiction of Jesus' ministry.

1.1.2.1 The ancient synagogue as institution

In order to understand the synagogue as an ancient institution this dissertation will first provide an overview of the recent research into the ancient synagogue in terms of its nature, function, and role in defining the socio-ethnic identity of ancient Judaism⁶ (1.7), before exploring the origin of the synagogue within Judaism in greater detail in Chapter Two. The assumption is that synagogues were instituted to fulfil specific functions in particular settings. In this regard it is often claimed to have originated after the Jews no longer had access to the Temple (cf. 2.2.2). This implies that the Jews developed the synagogue in order to provide them with a place in which to study the Torah and their tradition, and that it was where they, in the Diaspora, were able to experience community life and encouragement that enabled them to remain faithful to their God (Gonzalez 2010:17). It could also imply that the synagogue took over some of the cultic functions of the temple (cf. 2.8.2).

In order to understand the synagogue as an institution from an early Christian perspective this study will also survey how it is depicted in the New Testament in Chapter Three. In the New Testament the synagogue as institution is depicted as the regular Jewish gathering place for prayer and worship, activities in which Jesus and his followers were actively involved. Jesus is, for example, described as teaching and performing miracles in a synagogue in Galilee (Matt 4:23; Lk 4:16) and in Capernaum (Mk 1:21; Lk 7:5; Jn 6:59). These events underscore the fact that various synagogues served as a primary location for most of Jesus' activities which included healing, teaching, preaching, and exorcism. All these activities seem to have been

⁶ While the use of the word "Judaism" as referring to the Jewish religion and its existence or origin is debated (see Boyarin 2018:70-102), the use of the word in this research work will be in reference to the life of the Jews living in the time of Jesus and Paul.

performed by Jesus in Galilee (Ryan 2016:3). Jesus and his followers also engaged with the officials of the various synagogues.⁷

1.1.2.2 The synagogue as a locale for ministry in Luke-Acts

In view of the centrality and the importance of the synagogue to the Jews and the indelible mark it made on Christianity in the New Testament, this study will secondly study its role in the ministry of the early church described by Luke in Luke-Acts. The fact that Luke indicates the synagogue as the starting point of the ministries of Jesus and Paul, suggests that it is worthwhile to study the synagogue as locale for ministry. The word συναγωγή occurs 37 times in Luke-Acts. In Luke alone the synagogue appears 16 times (Lk 4:15-44 (seven times); 6:6; 7:5 (two times); 8:41, 49 (two times); 11:43; 12:11 (two times); 13:10-14 (two times); 20:46 (once)) while in Acts it appears 21 times (Acts 6:9; 9:2, 20; 13:5, 13-15 (six times); 14:1; 15:21; 17:1-4, 10, 17 (six times); 18:4, 7-8, 17, 19, 26 (five times); 19:8; 22:19; 24:12; 26:11 (four times)). Of these references 14 refer to a synagogue in passing and provide no specific information on the way it was used as a locale for ministry; 16 pericopes, however, do provide information on their ministry in the various synagogues, but do not expand on the subject (see the table below). These ministries include exorcisms and healings (Lk 4:33-35; 13:11-13), teaching, reading and exhortation (Lk 13:10; Acts 13:14-15), expounding the law (Acts 15:20), reasoning over Scripture (Acts 17:1-2; 18:4, 19), speaking (Acts 13:5; 18:26; 19:8), and the punishment of transgressors (Acts 22:19; 26:11). It is thus clear that a variety of ministries were practiced in the various synagogues mentioned in the New Testament.

⁷ Jairus (Mk 5:21-43) is named as the Capernaum synagogue leader and may have been the official responsible for its upkeep and for maintaining the order and sanctity of the service (Yamauchi 1992:782; White 2009:655). Charlesworth (2006:19) indicates the importance of the geographical location of Capernaum. According to him, Capernaum was near a gentile territory and they shared a border crossing into ancient Palestine. Its strategic location called for a competent centurion. According to Luke he contributed to the building of a synagogue. Others in the New Testament who might have played a similar role, include Crispus (Acts 18:8) and Sosthenes (Acts 18:17). Some followers of Jesus, like those mentioned in Acts, were thus leading figures within their respective synagogues.

Table 1

| Function and description of synagogue | Synagogue just mentioned | The ministry of Jesus in the synagogue expanded on | Information on the ministry in the various synagogues not expanded on |
|--|---|---|--|
| Text | Luke 4:38; ⁸ 7:5; ⁹ 8:41, 49; ¹⁰ 11:43; ¹¹ 12:11; ¹² 13:14; ¹³ 20:46; ¹⁴ Acts 6:9; | Luke 4:16-30. | Luke 4:15, 33, 44; 6:6; 13:10; Acts 9:20; 12:5; 13:4-5, 14-15; 14:1; 15:21; |

⁸ In Luke 4:38, Jesus is said to have left the synagogue and gone to the house of Simon with no information on the synagogue he was in, what he was doing there, or why he left.

⁹ Luke 7:5 not only mentions the name of the synagogue, but also that it was built by a centurion who was not a Jew, indicating that some non-Jews were positive towards the local synagogue.

¹⁰ In these two verses – Luke 8:41 and 49 – the synagogue is just mentioned in connection with Jairus, who is said to have built the synagogue for the Jews with no further elaboration.

¹¹ Here the synagogue is mentioned in connection with the Pharisees who sought to occupy the seats of honour (the front seats near the ark) in it.

¹² In Luke 12:11 the synagogue is mentioned without providing information on what transpires there. It only states that the followers of Jesus will be brought before rulers and authorities without details of what will happen to them.

¹³ Luke 13:14 mentions that Jesus taught and healed a crippled woman on a Sabbath and the synagogue leader was furious at his action.

¹⁴ In Luke 20:56 the synagogue is mentioned in connection with teachers of the law who seek places of honour to showcase their clothes and attract respect.

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| | 9:2; ¹⁵ 18:7, 8, 17; ¹⁶ and 24:12. ¹⁷ | | 17:1-2; 18:4, 19, 26; 19:8; 22:19; 26:11. ¹⁸ |
|--|---|--|--|

In terms of the information provided on the ministry in the various synagogues but not expanded on, a number of ministries are mentioned in Luke-Acts (cf. the fourth column); references are made to exorcisms, healings, teaching, reading, exhortation and expounding the law, reasoning over Scripture, and the punishment of transgressors. These references recorded by Luke emphasise the fact that the synagogues mentioned by Luke largely replicate the known practices and ministries of the ancient synagogue.

Luke 4:15; 33; 44 and 13:10 describe how Jesus taught, preached and healed in the synagogue. This combination of both healing and teaching in the synagogue also explains how Jesus practiced his ministry in a spiritual and physical sense, as stated in Luke 4:16-30, where he states his ministerial agenda. Acts 9:20; 13:4-5, 14-15; 15:21; 17:1-2; 18:4, 19, 26 and 19:8 also explain how Paul preached, proclaimed, reasoned and spoke boldly in the synagogue. In

¹⁵ In Acts 6:9 the synagogue is just mentioned in connection with its members who refer to “freedmen” who arose to oppose Stephen and argue with him. Paul in Acts 9:2 also mentions how he requested a letter from the high priest to go to the synagogue in Damascus to arrest people.

¹⁶ In Acts 18:7; 8 and 17, the synagogue is just mentioned. In v. 7 Paul leaves the synagogue, and in vv. 8 and 17 the synagogue is mentioned in connection with Crispus and Sosthenes, who are said to be leaders in the synagogue. However, if 18:1-6 is taken into consideration, this synagogue was in Corinth, where Paul reasoned with the aim of persuading both the Greeks and the Jews, which is all we know about it.

¹⁷ In Acts 24:12 Paul only explains how his accusers did not find fault with him and stirred up people in the synagogue and elsewhere against him. However, this assertion may be taken as consolidating Jesus’ words to his disciples that they will be brought before rulers and authorities to defend themselves. In view of this, one may assume that Paul was possibly brought before the rulers of the synagogue to defend himself.

¹⁸ These passages relate what happened when Jesus or Paul entered various synagogues. They mention some of the ministries that occurred in them, but do not expand on what these ministries entailed. These ministries are similar to those mentioned in the various passages in 1.1 and include exorcisms, healings, teaching, reading, exhortation and expounding the law, reasoning over the Scripture and the punishment of transgressors. Luke’s description of what happened in various synagogues matches what is known of ministries of ancient synagogues (2.7). However, while there may be differences in terms of role when compared with the ancient synagogue, what needs to be taken into consideration, is the fact that the synagogue did not only exist, but that it existed for a purpose.

Acts 13:13-51 Paul and Barnabas teach and exhort the people in the synagogue after which they are invited to speak again the following Sabbath. In their teaching, Paul takes the people in the synagogue through the history of Israel starting with how they were chosen, their stay in Egypt, and kings, up to the time of Jesus. However, despite their convincing teaching, Paul and Barnabas are rejected because the people become jealous when they see the crowds. Paul and Barnabas explain the importance of speaking the Word to them, but they reject them, so Paul and Barnabas turn their attention to the gentiles. This implies that, according to Luke, both Jesus and Paul prioritised the synagogue as institution as the starting point of their ministry, but both were rejected by the various synagogues.

1.1.2.2 The pivotal role of Luke 4:16-30 in Luke's depiction of Jesus' ministry

In view of a synagogue being the starting point of Jesus' ministry this study will thirdly investigate the importance of the Lukan Jesus beginning his earthly ministry in a synagogue according to Luke 4:16-30. It will investigate whether Jesus is specifically depicted by Luke as announcing his message in a synagogue to signal the transformation of the ministry of the synagogue (and others), or if the location itself is incidental. Would the announcement of the Lukan Jesus, for example, have had the same meaning and impact if he had delivered it in an open field?

In this regard it is noteworthy that Paul is also presented by Luke as using a synagogue as a starting point for his ministry in the places he visited (Acts 13:4-5). This raises the question whether the Lukan Jesus and Paul were simply using synagogues since they were the common meeting place of Jews and thus a convenient starting place for their public ministries, or were they attempting to strategically shift the ministry of the communities already meeting in the synagogues by engaging them in a locale in which they were gathering to listen to the authoritative Jewish Scriptures being read and interpreted. In order to answer this question, it is important to investigate the pivotal role of Luke 4:16-30 in Luke-Acts. It is therefore necessary to understand where Luke 4:16-30 fits into the narration of Luke-Acts in that it occupies an important place in the Lukan narration as it marks the beginning of Luke's record

of Jesus' ministry (Barker and Kohlenberger 1994:225; Manus 2009:39),¹⁹ which in turn determines the ministry of his followers narrated in Acts. It thus sets the agenda that is followed throughout both the ministry of Jesus and that of his church (Lk 7:18-24; Acts 32-37; Lk 4:16; Acts 14).

It is furthermore possible that Luke 4:16-30 is an indication of Jesus' strategy for his mission. Luke depicts Jesus as reading and interpreting Isaiah in a synagogue setting, after being invited to do so by the synagogue authorities, and not in a public space like on a hill or in a field, which adds authority to his words. The synagogue was the locale in which the community was habitually instructed on what their communal understanding should be of what being faithful to Scripture entailed. Luke's link between Jesus' message and Scripture adds to the authority thereof. In Luke-Acts only Luke 4:16-30 provides an extensive account of Jesus' teaching. While the content of Jesus' teaching is omitted in other passages where Jesus is said to have taught or preached in synagogues, Luke 4:16-30 relates the content of Jesus' teaching and how people reacted to the message. According to Luke, Jesus provided a new interpretation of Scripture which he intended to direct the life of the community. Manus (2009:39) is of the opinion that the Lukan Jesus read Trito-Isaiah, which was originally written to the exiles of the people of God who were returning to a new situation. He also states that, as part of an effort to promote his universal theology, Luke reworded this tradition into a Sabbath sermon by Jesus, now addressed to all the lovers of God in a new context, especially non-Jews.

Acts is included in this study alongside the Gospel of Luke because in passages like Acts 13:4-5 and 17:1-4, Luke seems to be following the same pattern as in his first volume. In Acts Luke portrays Paul and Barnabas immediately after their commission beginning their ministry by preaching in a synagogue and thereafter frequenting it as a habit, like Jesus in Luke's gospel. In order to understand the role of synagogue in Luke 4:16-30 it is therefore important to not only consider how it relates to Jesus' ministry in various synagogues in the Gospel of Luke but also to how Paul's ministry in Acts is described by Luke as being conducted in various synagogues. By considering the role of the synagogue as locale for ministry in Luke-Acts it is possible to ascertain if it was simply a convenient locale, or if Luke considered it to be both

¹⁹ It is part of a larger narrative in Luke 4:14-9:50 (Barker and Kohlenberger 1994:225). The literary and compositional elements are derived from Isaiah 61:1-3, where they were originally recorded as crimes against God's holiness (Manus 2009:39).

strategic and programmatic for the ministries of Jesus and Paul. It could be strategic in that a message delivered in a synagogue reached a bigger audience and was considered to be more authoritative than one delivered in a house or in a field and therefore, according to Luke, both Jesus and Paul deliberately used it as a locale for their ministry. The use of Scripture by the Lukan Jesus would have added further weight to his words. The episode could also have been programmatic in that it determined the manner in which Jesus and Paul would conduct their missions in that they would concentrate on spreading their message in various synagogues.

1.2 Motivation for research

The motivation for this study arises from the challenges faced by the contemporary church in Nigeria in addressing the numerous ministerial needs of its faith communities. This dissertation therefore intends to study how the synagogue was used as a location for addressing the needs of various communities in Luke-Acts, with a focus on Luke 4:16-30, before briefly reflecting on whether the insights gained through this study of Luke-Acts are in some way applicable to the ministry of the Nigerian church (6.4).

The reason for using a socio-historical approach is the uncritical manner in which many contemporary churches in Nigeria use the Bible to support their various ministries. Churches and ministers often use the Bible in a fundamentalist manner that does not take the historical distance and social differences between contemporary Nigeria and the world of the Bible into consideration. For this reason, this study intentionally focusses on the socio-historical context of Luke and that of the synagogues in which he depicts Jesus and Paul practising their ministries. It is my hope that this approach will improve the historical consciousness of Nigerian churches when engaging with the Bible and that they will be made aware of the richness of the meaning of the Bible when read within its socio-historical context instead of having a contemporary meaning projected onto it.

1.3 Research gap, aim and thesis

1.3.1 Research gap

Despite numerous commentaries on Luke-Acts and studies of the synagogue in general, there are no studies devoted solely to the study of the role of the synagogue in Jesus' and Paul's ministries in the Gospel of Luke and Acts respectively. In view of this research gap this study will study the synagogue as an ancient institution, Luke's depiction of the synagogue as a locale for ministry in Luke-Acts and the pivotal role Luke 4:16-30 plays in Luke's depiction of Jesus' ministry in order to address this research gap.

1.3.2 Research aim

This dissertation intends to undertake a study of the synagogue as an ancient institution, Luke's depiction of this institution as a locale for ministry in Luke-Acts and the pivotal role Luke 4:16-30 plays in Luke's depiction of Jesus' ministry, in order to understand how the Lukan Jesus and Paul used the synagogue as a location for their ministries.

It should be noted that while the situation of the church in Nigeria provides the motivation for this study, it does not mean that the intent of this study is therefore to develop a practical theological model of ministry for the Nigerian church. The researcher, however, acknowledges that the research questions which underlie this study did not arise in a vacuum and therefore it is important to briefly reflect on the implication of the conclusions of this study for the context in which it arose at its conclusion (6.4). Methodologically and in terms of subject matter this study falls within the field of New Testament studies and not Practical Theology.

1.3.3 Thesis

The thesis that this study will investigate is that both Jesus and Paul began their respective ministries synagogues in Luke-Acts for a strategic purpose rather than simply a practical one and that, according to Luke, Jesus wanted to align the audience in the synagogue with his message of good news for the poor.

1.4 Research questions

In line with the already stated aim and thesis, the primary research questions of this dissertation are:

1. What was the function of the ancient synagogue within in Judaism?
2. Did Jesus beginning his ministry in a synagogue (Luke 4:16-30) and Paul doing the same (Acts 13:4-5) signal the intent of their respective missions, as well as how they intended to accomplish this?

The first question will be addressed in Chapters Two and Three while the second will be addressed in Chapter Five after an overview of the socio-historical background of Luke-Acts in Chapter Four.

1.5 The scope of the study

This study will first attempt to define the function of the ancient synagogue in terms of its origin (Chapter Two) and how it is described in the New Testament (Chapter Three) before focussing on the role of the synagogue in Luke-Acts (Chapter Five) in order to answer the first research question.²⁰ In order to answer the second research question, the scope of this study will be limited to Luke-Acts in general and Luke 4:16-30 in particular.

1.6 Recent research on the ancient synagogue

Since this research is not being undertaken in a vacuum, it is necessary to review the work done so far on the synagogue in general.

²⁰ The New Testament records several small towns in Galilee and their synagogues (Matt 4:23; 9:35; Lk 4:16, 33) (White 1996:650-1). The gospels narrate that Jesus used these synagogues as a setting for proclaiming his message of the coming kingdom. Synagogues in the New Testament also provided a preaching space for Peter and Paul and other early Christian missionaries. It is possible that the synagogues historically served as incubators for keeping the early Christian movement alive long enough to survive on its own at a later stage.

1.6.1 The nature and function of the ancient synagogue

The services and the functions of the ancient synagogue as an institution have gained the attention of scholars since biblical historical research started in the 16th century (Saldarini 1989:1080; Bray 1996:225). This, however, did not mark the start of scholarly interest in the nature of the early synagogue. As is apparent from the works of Philo and Josephus (1.1), reflections about the origin and nature of these institutions already occurred in the 1st century (Saldarini 1989:1080).

Despite the long history of research into the synagogue it must be noted that until recently there was a lack of detailed, up-to-date analysis of the history of research on the origin and function of the ancient synagogue (Runesson 2001:70). This has resulted in views and theories that were regarded as incontestable facts being reassessed by scholars (Runesson, Binder and Olsson 2008:1; Runesson 2001:23). Furthermore, while synagogues are referred to in academic studies of various types for different reasons, few studies focus on the institutions themselves. Most descriptions and references to the synagogue and its activities comment on Judaism as a religious or ethnic tradition rather than studying the role and function of the synagogue itself as an institution in any given century (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:1). Rajak and Noy (1993:76) note how the synagogue as a *building* has received more interest than its role as a *community*. In many studies it even acquired an allegorical life of its own, becoming a representative, used positively or negatively, of a religious tradition with its adherers denying its relationship to other religions, cultures and peoples (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:1).

There has, however, been a renewed interest in the study of the ancient synagogue over the last three decades, with several researchers involved in attempts to unveil the mysteries that surround its origins and development (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:5; Meyers 1992:252). The renewed enthusiasm for the study of the ancient synagogue can be explained on the basis of the vital role it played in the life of the Jewish people in antiquity. Understanding the role and development of the synagogue is crucial for the study of Jewish history since the synagogue served as an important institution for Jewish social, political, and religious identity formation (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:5; Runesson 2013:903). Thus, understanding the nature and origin of the ancient synagogue becomes decisive not only for scholars working within the fields of early Jewish and Christian history respectively, but also for researchers interested in

studying the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity. The ground has been prepared for a renewed understanding of the most important institutional settings of nascent Judaism and Christianity, with far-reaching implications for our understanding of the formative period of these religions.

1.6.2 The role of the synagogue in defining the socio-ethnic identity of ancient Judaism

Several 19th and 20th century academic studies on ancient Judaism and Christianity argue that the institution of the synagogue was an essential one that helped define the socio-ethnic and religious differences between the various groups of the 1st century (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:1). Reflecting on the 1st century Diaspora Jews, and specifically the activity of reading and teaching the Torah on each Sabbath, Runesson, Binder and Olson (2008:2), as well as White (2009:650), state that these activities practiced in the synagogues by the Jews could provide a reason for the generally positive attitudes of Greco-Roman neighbours and rulers towards them since they were also interested in maintaining law and order. On the other hand, the early followers of Jesus in their writings often focussed on intra-Jewish interactions, both friendly and hostile, within synagogues, and the difference between their meetings and those of the synagogue community. This is already suggested by the designation Matthew chose for his community of Jesus-followers, “Christians”, as not being a “synagogue” but rather ἐκκλησία in Matthew 16:18 and 18:17 (Kee 1990a:867). In contrast, later non-Jewish Christians shaped a thoroughly undesirable portrayal of the synagogue as standing for everything considered to be opposed to Christianity (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:2). For them ultimate truth could only be found within the institution of the church. Thus, over centuries church and synagogue came to be understood as irreconcilable rivals.

As the Roman Empire gradually changed into a Christian mono-religion, this view ultimately became the norm (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:2). The earlier respect which the Greco-Romans accorded the ancient Jewish institutional tradition was replaced by religio-political intolerance (Gonzalez 2007:15; Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:2). Inevitably, marginalisation followed for the Jews as a people. Anti-synagogue legislation started appearing in the 5th century when Theodosius in 438 CE banned the construction of new synagogues,

although he allowed that existing buildings could be repaired. But later, in the 6th century, Justinian expanded such legislation aimed at circumscribing Jewish communal life. Supported by political interests, the situation became cemented in Christian Europe (Gonzalez 2007:303; Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:2).

In the East, with the emergence of Islam in the 7th century (Gonzalez 2007:289-90), such developments were halted, as Christian anti-Jewish rhetoric was prevented from entering the strata of political power. With Islam dictating the dominant vision of a just religious society, neither the synagogue nor the church had access to the political influence needed to marginalise each other (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:2). By this time, however, the social reality of synagogue and church as different and independent institutions, had already been firmly established, although it is possible that some Jews believed in Christ. This development in the West led to the formation within conventional culture of two basic assumptions about the synagogue, assumptions that have continued till our time, even within the scholarly community (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:2-3). The first is that the synagogue from the 1st century onwards has been referred to as an institution that is different from the church. This has resulted in the misunderstanding of 1st-century synagogues and churches as two different institutions in constant conflict with each other (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:3). Mitton (1966:83), in reference to James 2:2, however, highlights how some early Christian churches continued to call their own meetings συναγωγή, and so the view that the synagogue was in constant conflict with the early Jesus-followers, needs to be re-evaluated. 1st-century institutional realities do not allow for a polarisation of categories; neither is the idea of consistent conflict warranted.

From an institutional perspective, the conflicting and totalising language of some Christian authors beginning in the 2nd century should not be read or taken as an accurate reflection of the 1st-century situation. Nor should it serve as a point of departure for analysing the Jewish and Christian interface in New Testament times as has so often been done. References to the synagogues seem to be repeatedly used as a replacement for the Pharisees as a group, who are wrongly seen to have provided the leadership in 1st-century synagogues before being replaced by rabbis in the late 1st to early 2nd centuries (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:3).

Cohen (1999:90), who claims to have not found any evidence supporting the view that Pharisees acted as leaders of the synagogue, considers this implausible. According to him, his study of seven passages from the New Testament, Josephus and the church fathers, does not

support this view. He, however, accepts that certain synagogues in ancient times could have been under the influence of the Pharisees. In agreement with Cohen's point, Runesson, Binder and Olson (2008:3) and Roetzel (1985:69) are of the opinion that the leadership of the synagogues consisted of people representing different religio-political outlooks. A number of leaders were priests – a fact that challenges the common supposition of a clear separation between Temple and synagogue in Jewish society. References to the “leadership of the synagogue” cannot be taken as a synonym for the Pharisees.

Roetzel (1985:69) further states that in general a synagogue's organisation was simple and that it differed from place to place. The role of the lay functionaries was administrative in nature as there were no ordained clergy directing the affairs of the synagogue. The lay officials were themselves responsible for the arrangement of the services, Sabbath and feast days, and managing the building. They also took care of the scrolls and possibly presided at services and meetings (Daen 1991:1312). The congregation itself and the lay officials were responsible for controlling the affairs of the synagogue. It is safe to say that the modern view of synagogue and church as different institutions, rests not only on the imposition of modern institutions upon the past, but also on culturally conditioned readings of isolated passages from the New Testament or rabbinic literature (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:3-4).

Runesson, Binder and Olson (2008:40) argue that common sense is not enough for historical analysis and that it may indeed even be deceptive, since every time and culture operates with its own definition of what constitutes collective wisdom. If ideas and theories about interactions between Jews, Christians, and Greco-Romans are based upon unfounded assumptions about ancient synagogues, then changes in the understanding of these institutions may lead to changes in the way people perceive the interaction between socio-religiously defined groups, Jewish, Christian, or other.

1.6.3 New approaches to the origin of the synagogue

Since the 1970s and 1980s broadly accepted ideas about the nature and origin of the synagogue in the Babylonian exile as a replacement for the lost temple, and that the synagogue's architecture displays stylistic patterns that indicate stages of development, have been increasingly challenged by scholars (Saldarine 1989:1080; Runesson, Binder and Olson

2008:6). Scholars like Fine and Brolley (2009:418) and Runesson, Binder and Olson (2008:6) express doubts about the origin of the synagogue since, despite the important role it played within Judaism in the 1st century, accurate information regarding its origin, mode of worship and social and cultural activities, is not available (Roetzel 1985:64). Ryan (2016:16) also concludes that tracing the origin of the synagogue has resulted in competing definitions of the synagogue as either a Greco-Roman association which is like a club, or a public municipal institution which is similar to a town hall.

However, despite all these different views on the origin of the synagogue, it is accepted by almost all researchers that the synagogue developed in a non-revolutionary manner and that its significance was recognised only when it was already a well-established institution of Jewish life. Today, most of the traditional understandings of the ancient synagogue have been dismantled by an unprecedented surge in specialist studies in the field. The fields of research related to ancient synagogues continue to multiply since the study of the ancient synagogue is by necessity an interdisciplinary endeavour. It is a difficult task to present an overview of synagogue studies while correlating the research of so many diverse sub-fields (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:6-7).

The work of scholars like Runesson, Binder and Olson (2008:7-9), who initiated important new approaches to synagogue research, however, may be generally categorised as focussing on one of four broad aspects of the ancient synagogue.

The first aspect is the *spatial aspect*, which is concerned not only with analyses of the archaeological remains of synagogues, but also with wider studies of Jewish art and iconography as they relate to synagogues. Contributions within this field consist of studies on specific synagogue remains, as well as attempts to integrate the evidence into more holistic interpretations. The problems of methodology and dating have been crucial in this research, particularly as they apply to the interpretation of art within a Jewish building. Recent comparative analyses have also focussed on the relationship between the synagogue and Greco-Roman temples, the Jerusalem Temple, Christian house churches, and Greco-Roman voluntary associations (*collegia*) (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:7; Runesson 2001:35).

The second aspect is the *liturgical aspect* of the ancient synagogue which deals mostly with religious aspects of the synagogue (Runesson 2001:34). In terms of research, it is another intensely researched sub-field in synagogue studies. This aspect asks questions such as what

religious activities were carried out in the early synagogues? In this regard the public reading of Torah is well attested (White 2009:657), but it remains a question if prayers were also included in early synagogue worship, and if they were, how were they conducted? And were public fasts and festivals furthermore observed within synagogues? Another question is how the various rituals were performed, and who performed them? In answering these questions, the liturgical material from Qumran has become increasingly important for the study of synagogue worship. To these more traditional research topics, one can add questions concerning Jewish magic and mysticism as they relate to the synagogue and its activities (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:7-8).

The third aspect is the *non-liturgical aspect*, which is sometimes referred to as the *social aspect* of the synagogue, which was not limited to liturgical activities only (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:7; Runesson 2001:34). Until recently, this was not explored as extensively as the previous two areas. However, in recent years this lacuna was noted, and major work has been done to widen the understanding of this important aspect of the synagogue. Referring to liturgical and non-liturgical aspects of the synagogue, Ryan (2016:15) states that synagogue research advanced in leaps and bounds at the end of the last millennium. For Ryan, the recent developments in synagogue studies have produced a “new perspective” on the study of the ancient synagogue. This new perspective as outlined by Ryan is “characterised by a recognition of the co-existence and intertwining of multiple aspects of the synagogue” that are liturgical and non-liturgical in nature. For example, the institution is understood to have served a diversity of purposes that could be seen as state functions, especially in Western culture. These include functioning as council halls, law courts, schools, treasuries, and public archives. One of the first scholars to call attention to such non-liturgical practices of the synagogue (particularly as they relate to synagogue origins) was Leopold Löw (1884), followed by Mendel Silber (1915), and Sidney B. Hoenig (1979). While Richard Horsley emphasises the communal aspect of ancient synagogues, Lee Levine is the strongest proponent for an understanding of the earliest synagogue based on non-liturgical activities today (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:8; Levine 2005:3960).

The fourth aspect is the *institutional aspect*, which refers to a variety of characteristics related to synagogue leadership and operations (Levine 2005:412; Roetzel 1985:68-70; Runesson 2001:34). Understanding this aspect is indispensable for understanding the place of synagogues in Jewish society. Several questions have been explored in this regard. Did any party, such as

the Pharisees, control the synagogues, or were synagogue hierarchies open to all regardless of group identity? What were the roles of priests in a synagogue setting? Recent research convincingly argues that Pharisees did not have more influence in synagogues than any other group – nor was it uncommon for priests to be leaders. Ancient synagogues clearly had an elaborate hierarchy: by the 1st century officials were given formal titles (Runesson, Binder and Olson 2008:9). However, it is still debated to what degree the hierarchies of the synagogue were modelled after that of the Jerusalem Temple.

1.7 Research methodology

Methodologically this research entails a socio-historical study of the synagogue as locus of ministry in Luke-Acts in general and Luke 4:16-30 in particular. As a socio-historical study it will focus on various social, political and economic factors relating to the 1st-century synagogues referred to in Luke-Acts from a historical point of view (Runesson 2001:37). This includes possible ministerial structures, rituals and beliefs (MacDonald 1988:2).

A socio-historical approach differs from social-scientific criticism which uses models from cultural anthropology as a heuristic guide with which modern western readers can interpret the non-western world (Jerome and Neyrey 2010:178). Instead a social-historical approach attempts to understand the social texture of a community in a particular time and place in history through the study of its extant texts (Meeks 1983:1-2). It also makes use of insights gained from archaeological and epigraphical studies in its study of these texts. This allows it to describe how a particular society functioned in a specific historical period. As a product of a specific social world, this study agrees with Combrink (1995:69) that the New Testament is a social document and that each entity who contributed to it addressed a specific people with a unique message for its time and place. This underlines the need to go back to the social reality that gave birth to early Christianity (MacDonald 1988:19) in that one could argue that no idea or institution (like the synagogue in Luke-Acts) can be explained and understood without first understanding the social situation in which it originated. In this study Luke's description in Luke-Acts of the ministry of Jesus and Paul in various synagogues in the 1st century will be studied by using a socio-historical approach that utilises key insights from sociological exegesis and the historical interpretation of Scripture.

1.7.1 Sociological exegesis

The socio-historical study of the New Testament, initially promoted by the Chicago school of theology in the early 19th century, focussed on the social and historical teachings of Jesus (Hynes 1981:12-13; Etukumana 2016:27). According to Etukumana (2016:28), despite the ground-breaking efforts of the Chicago school of theology which underscored the importance of understanding the social world of early Christianity, the need to deliberately examine early Christianity from a sociological viewpoint, did not gain the attention of most New Testament scholars until the works of Wayne Meeks (1972), John Gager (1975), Gerd Theissen (1977), and others who focussed on investigating the social world that gave birth to the New Testament. In this study the sociological approach of Theissen will be used as an example of a socio-historical approach to the New Testament. It should be noted that while Theissen describes his approach as a sociological approach, in terms of the distinction made above between sociological and social-historical approaches (1.7) it can rather be described as a socio-historical approach in that he uses textual, epigraphical and archaeological information from the ancient world instead of models from cultural anthropology in his approach.

Theissen emphasises the importance of the sociological investigation of the New Testament text as literature for understanding what determines the social behaviour of both the authors and the recipients of New Testament texts. This entails paying attention to the situation and the intent of a biblical text as a typical form of symbolic communication (Theissen 1983:29). Thus, it can rightly be said that the writing of any given text is motivated and influenced by the social behaviour of the people who create it (Theissen 1977:3). In view of this, Theissen identifies three approaches to the sociological interpretation of the social world that gave birth to the biblical text: the constructive, analytical and comparative approaches.

1.7.1.1 *The constructive approach*

According to Theissen (1977:3; 1992:36), the constructive approach studies the social circumstances from which a text emanated. It obtains information through the evaluation of the biographical date, origin and behaviour of the group it was created in (Theissen 1977:3). It attempts to unveil the social location of a text by studying what is mentioned in the text (MacDonald 1988:21). It also provides data on the origin, status of people, societal events,

organisations and the way people conduct themselves in a society (Theissen 1977:3). For example, Luke 7:1-9 mentions a centurion who built a synagogue for the Jews and who sent some Jewish elders to plead with Jesus to come and heal his sick servant. A constructivist approach to this passage provides important socio-historical information on the financial means of Roman centurions and raises the possibility that non-Jews contributed to the construction of synagogues in the ancient world. In line with this approach, this research will try to describe the role of the synagogue in the 1st century in order to better understand Jesus' and Paul's engagement with various synagogues.

1.7.1.2 The analytical approach

The second approach suggested by Theissen is an analytical approach. An analytical approach to biblical text provides an interpreter with the opportunity to use the content of a text to assume something about the social situation in which the text emanated (Theissen 1977:3; MacDonald 1988:21-22).²¹ This approach uses the evidence in the text to postulate the type of social behaviour or standard of life revealed by the text (Theissen 1992:60-1). It can also provide information about events and conflict between groups regarding morals or norms even when this is not clearly spelled out in the text itself. It can, in other words, read between the lines to infer information about the social situation in which a text was produced. Luke 13:14-17, for example, depicts a synagogue ruler who was angered by Jesus healing a man on a Sabbath. This incident allows the interpreter to speculate on the possible role the ruler of a synagogue played in interpreting the law and applying it within the ministry of the synagogue. It can also be understood to indicate that the synagogue and its functionaries played a key role in determining what is acceptable practices within the broader community.

1.7.1.3 The comparative approach

The third and the last approach suggested by Theissen is the comparative approach. A comparative approach involves comparing primitive Christian sources with contemporary

²¹ See Silas (2016:33-34) for an extended discussion of the analytical approach.

parallels. According to MacDonald (1988:22), sources “can be employed to gain understanding of the early Christian movement, either by contrasting it with various aspects of the surrounding culture or by looking for similarities between early Christianity and movements and groups of other times and places”.

Scholars commonly hold the view that the Gospel of Luke was written by a non-Jewish writer for non-Jewish recipients (Esker 1987:44-45; Theissen, 2001:85-95). One can therefore assume that writing from within Greco-Roman society as a gentile, Luke was influenced by the way of life of this world. Texts like Luke 1:8-10 and 2:22-28 suggest that Luke also derived some of his insight from the Old Testament. For example, Luke 4:16-30 and vv. 17b-19 can be understood as a quotation from the book of Isaiah 61:1 and 58:6. This intertextual relationship with a Jewish text calls for the use of a comparative approach. This is further supported by the argument of Brown (1997:226) that the background of Christianity can be traced back to the religion of the Jews, and that Luke would possibly have chosen to use the materials available to him: its source of faith, religious practices, and especially the religious practice that gave birth to Christianity.

The “comparative approach” as suggested by Theissen (1992:44), offers the ability to compare different sources and Jewish institutions that were contemporaries of the synagogue, or which may have influenced the synagogue, for example, the synagogue may have taken the place of the Temple. So, analysing the function of the synagogue in meeting the needs of the community in Luke-Acts, will provide insights into how Luke understood the synagogue and its role as different to that of the Temple in both the Jewish context and that of 1st-century religions. Moreover, it is generally understood that the synagogue came into existence as a result of the distance from the Temple in Jerusalem for many Jews. Since people could not access the Temple while in Diaspora and other places in Palestine, they devised another means of gathering, known as the synagogue, for the purpose of reading the Torah and saying their communal prayers (Ehrman 2000:37). In view of this, the application of a comparative approach in the treatment of the synagogue and other institutions is of importance in this research work. Hence all three approaches suggested by Theissen (constructive, analytical and comparative approaches) will be considered in the course of this study, as stated earlier.

1.7.2 The historical interpretation of Luke-Acts

It is important to note that the use of sociological exegesis as discussed above is not free of problems, as scholars who employed the social sciences have in the past been accused of working deductively. Furthermore, if it is not carefully utilised, it can be reductionistic in nature (Neyrey 2008:xxii; MacDonald 1988:22-3; Van Staden, 1991:178; Meeks 1983:2-3). Deductive work entails paying only slight attention to the particularities of the text (Neyrey 2008:xxii), while reductionism entails viewing a text or an issue in a narrow way resulting in an inability to see it from a different perspective and in a different framework (Kim 2012:118). Reductionism can also be understood as a one-sided view of a text. To avoid these dangers, this study will focus on the social context in which the biblical text originated within a particular historical period. It will therefore also incorporate a historical approach to the text and its context.

A historical approach to a text gives the contemporary reader some access to people, places and events of the ancient world in which the text came into being. This can also help the interpreter to judge the truth or falsity of the historical claim the text makes (Aune 2010:101). This study agrees with Barton (1995:63-4) that the use of historical data in treating the text of the New Testament is not only appropriate, but necessary. It should also be kept in mind that the New Testament as a document originated from a different world than ours. It is understood to have been written in the *koiné* Greek of antiquity, and its form and content are indebted to the character and worldview of the Greco-Roman society in general in which it was written (Barton 1995:64). As a document from the past, the distance between us and the people of the past in terms of chronology, language, thought, culture, and social patterns necessitates the use of a historical critical approach to the biblical text instead of a purely sociological one. A historical critical approach to a text helps us to understand a text from the past. It serves as a mediator between the past and the present. It also has the capacity to help us decipher texts in terms of their historical settings (Barton 1995:64). This is important since no interpretation or reading of a text can be undertaken without considering the world that gave birth to it. All texts are historical phenomena that originate at specific times and places, under specific political, linguistic, cultural, and religious conditions (Tate 1991:4). It is therefore important to take the social world of the historical context in which Luke-Acts was written into consideration when studying it.

The focus on both the social and historical context of Luke-Acts in the socio-historical approach of this research potentially provides the researcher with a balanced insight. The social aspects of the synagogues in Luke-Acts will therefore be explored in accord with its historical setting (cf. De Silva 2000:18-9). A socio-historical study traces the instituting of various aspects of community life, including what people think and feel about the world, ethics, ministry structures, ritual forms, and beliefs as suggested in the text (MacDonald 1988:2). On this note, I agree with Barton (2007:179) that analysing a text in terms of its own historical setting using a historical-critical method, prevents reading the present into a text. Understanding developed through the historical-critical method, for example, deals with the intention of the author, the issues that brought about the existence of the text and the circumstances that surrounded it (Aune 2010:105-8). In the words of Cranford (2002:149), “The New Testament interpreter has to take the bits of historical reference within the text, add to them the data available from other contemporary sources, and then attempt to reconstruct a history as a background to facilitate better understanding of the text itself”. This implies that the historical-critical method analyses the biblical narrative not as a work of pure fiction, even if it contains some fictional material, in that it refers to realities of the world behind the text in relation to that of which the narrative functions as a witness (Barton 1995:65).

1.8 Outline of study

Having discussed the socio-historical method as it will be applied in this study as a combination of sociological and historical approaches, a brief outline will now be given of how this approach will be used to investigate the synagogue as a locus of ministry in Luke-Acts.

As stated in 1.3, this study focusses on the synagogue as a location of ministry in Luke-Acts (and Luke 4:16-30 in particular) using a socio-historical approach²² for Jesus and his disciples

²² Regarding the priestly system, the Old Testament clearly differentiates the religious ministrations of cultic professionals on the one hand and the laity on the other hand. The LXX uses the verbs λειτουργία and λατρεύειν to refer to the religious service of the entire assembly or of an individual (Bodey 2009:260; Walker and Beckwith 1996:769). In the New Testament the most commonly used word is διακονία, originally signifying the role of a table waiter (Lk 12:37; 17:8; Jn 12:2). However, in the New Testament this signifies the idea of supplying a wide range of beneficial services for another’s advancement, whether in relation to God or

in Luke, and his followers in Acts, within the context of the early 1st-century world in general and that of the Gospel of Luke and Acts in particular. It therefore involves studying the role of the synagogue in terms of various actions that it performed in the 1st century (cf. 2.7). Since the synagogue, as stated earlier (1.1), has often been understood to be a Jewish institution that took the place of the Temple, Chapter Two will survey the historical origin and function of the synagogue and how it relates to that of the Temple and other institutions like the tabernacle and city gate, since the synagogue is assumed to have taken over some of their functions. This historical survey of the synagogue, its origin, and its role in relation to other Jewish institutions, will provide vital information for understanding the synagogue and its role in addressing the needs of its society in Luke-Acts. In this chapter the focus will be on the historical origin of the synagogue and its initial function.

Therefore, Chapter Two will focus on references to the synagogue outside the New Testament. It will discuss different theories on the origin of the synagogue (2.2), archaeological evidence (2.3), different names for the synagogue (2.4), the intertestamental period (2.5), the role of communal institutions in the Greco-Roman world (2.6), the role of the synagogue (2.7), other influences (2.8), its functionaries (2.9), the place of women (2.10), and its relationship with the ἐκκλησία (2.11).

Chapter Three will focus on the references to the synagogue and its role in the New Testament. It will specifically survey the role of the synagogue in the New Testament in relation to meeting the needs of various communities. This survey will attempt to ascertain whether the New Testament description of the synagogue's function aligns with how the synagogue operated within Judaism as indicated by the survey undertaken in Chapter Two. This chapter will use the approaches described by Theissen (1.7). While the constructive approach will be used to survey the Synoptic Gospels, James and Revelation, the analytical approach will be used for

other human beings (Bodey 2009:260). In the Christian community the word διακονία has a wider meaning which includes: discipline in general (Jn 12:26); the totality of God's Jesus work both for the world and the church (Acts 21:19; 1 Cor 16:15; Eph 4:11; Col 4:17; 2 Tim 4:5); it also has to do with preaching and teaching of the Word (Acts 6:4); it can be gifts for different spiritual purposes and services (Rom 17:7; 1 Cor 12:5), distribution of welfare materials (Acts 6:1) and contributions from gentile churches for the needy (2 Cor 8:4); acts of generosity from an individual to another individual, e.g. the services Tychicus rendered to Paul (Eph 6:21); as well as the office of the deacons in Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8, 12 (Bodey 2009:260-1).

studying the Pauline tradition before the comparative approach will be used to compare how the synagogue is depicted in the New Testament with what is known of the ancient synagogue as discussed in Chapter Two.

Since this research is on the synagogue as locus for ministry in Luke-Acts, with a focus on Luke 4:16-30, the focus in Chapter Four will be on the socio-historical context of Luke-Acts. In this chapter, after looking at the socio-historical context of Luke and Acts, the unity and the literary composition of Luke-Acts will also be investigated. Particular attention will be given to where Luke 4:16-30 fits into the literary narrative of Luke's gospel as this determines its meaning.

Having surveyed the references to the synagogue in the rest of the New Testament in chapter Three and socio-historical context of Luke-Acts in chapter Four, Chapter Five of the study will then examine the role of the synagogue in Luke-Acts, with a focus on Luke 4:16-30. This is important since the term συναγωγή is used over 50 times in the gospels and Acts, and Jesus is presented as teaching in the synagogues of several small towns in Galilee (Matt 4:23; 9:35; Lk 4:16, 33) (White 1996:650-1).²³ Chapter Five will attempt to discern whether the synagogue and its functions in Luke-Acts align with its role in Chapter Two. In this chapter an overview of the synagogue in Luke-Acts will be given, followed by that of the Lukan description of Paul's engagement with the synagogues in Acts and a socio-historical study of Luke 4:16-30. While an analytical and comparative approach will be used to study the Lukan description of Paul's engagement with the synagogue, all three approaches will be used in the socio-historical study of Luke 4:16-30.

²³ Examples of references to a synagogue in the gospels are: "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people" (Matt 4:23); "So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward" (Matt 6:2); "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward" (Matt 6:5); "Then Jesus, led with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone" (Lk 4:14-15); "As he taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets" (Mk 12:38-39).

In the concluding chapter an overview of the study (6.2) and a summary of its results (6.3) will be given, before a few suggestions will be made regarding how the church in Nigeria can utilise the church as a locus for ministry based on the insights gleaned through this study (6.4).

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter undertook a brief review of the studies that have been done of the ancient synagogue (1.6), and articulated the research questions (1.4), aim (1.3) and motivation (1.2). The scope of the research (1.5), as well as the method chosen to undertake the research, were also discussed (1.7).

In choosing to use a socio-historical method it was stated that understanding the New Testament is not possible without knowledge of the social and historical world in which it was produced. Therefore, Theissen's sociological approaches to biblical texts, which include constructive, analytical, and comparison approaches, will be used in the course of this study.

Chapter Two – *The origin and function of the ancient synagogue*

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter One of this dissertation the importance of the synagogue for the Jews was noted. In this chapter, the origin of the synagogue will be explored. The origin of the synagogue is important since it emerged to serve the specific needs of the Jewish community. In serving these needs, it fulfilled a specific purpose, and it is thus important to ascertain if this purpose remained fixed over time or if it developed, depending on the context of a synagogue. Determining the role of the socio-historical context of a synagogue can in turn shed light on the question if Jesus' sermon in Luke 4:16-30 was aligned with the purpose of the synagogue or if he wanted to change it.

Determining the question as to where, when, and how the synagogue originated, has produced many theories (Saldarini 1989:1080). For many the synagogue's origins are shrouded in mystery and may never be known (Runesson 2001:21, 70). The difficulty in searching for the origin of the synagogue is illustrated by the fact that every period in the history of Israel, including the time prior to the First Temple, has at some stage been considered by scholars as a possible period for the emergence of the synagogue. Specific periods such as the Solomonic Temple period, the Babylonian exile period, the period of Zerubbabel's Temple and the time immediately after the destruction of the Temple, have all been suggested as possible times when the synagogue came into existence (Runesson 2001:23).

It should be noted that it is beyond the scope of this research to present a definitive answer on the origin of the synagogue. This research is primarily focussed on how Jesus used synagogues as a gathering place for meeting the social needs of the communities in which it existed. It is not primarily a study of how the synagogue came into existence. It is, however, important to briefly survey the possible origin of the synagogue since this can illuminate its intended purpose and functions.

Besides tracing the origin of the synagogue, this chapter will also look at archaeological evidence of the origin of the synagogue (2.3), different names for the synagogue that could indicate different functions (2.4), the synagogue in the intertestamental period (2.5), the role of communal institutions in the Greco-Roman world (2.7), as well as two possible influences on the synagogue during its origin (2.8). The role of different functionaries (2.9) and women in the synagogue (2.10), as well as its relationship with the ἐκκλησία (2.11), will also be considered.

2.2 Theories on the origin of the synagogue

To address the matter of the synagogue's origin, scholars have in various ways tried to bring to light the historical context, or moment that led to the emergence of this important institution. Given the sources available, or more exactly, the lack thereof, the effort has however become an exercise in guesswork with the result that theories on the time it was instituted, range over a period of almost 800 years (Levine 1996:426).

In tracing the origin of the synagogue, I will work primarily with the insights of Hachili (1997) and Runesson (2001), who have written extensively on the origin of the synagogue.

Hachlili (1997:34) identifies the positions which scholars have advocated for the time of the origin of the synagogue as:

- In the late First Temple period (7th century BCE) in Eretz Israel;
- In the Babylonian exile and Diaspora;
- In the Jerusalem Temple court with the return from Babylonian exile;
- In the Second Temple period when the Hasmonean revolution brought about the emergence of the synagogue.

2.2.1 An early origin in Israel

The first theory attributes the origin of the synagogue to the First Temple period (7th century BCE) in Israel. This is founded either on a specific Bible text (1 Kgs 8:27-30; 2 Kgs 4:23) or a dramatic identifiable historical event, such as King Josiah's reforms (Hachlili 1997:34; Levine

1996:426). It maintains that the synagogue as an institution specifically started with the Deuteronomic restructuring of Josiah in 621 BCE in Judaea. It assumes that places that were previously used as cultic sacrificial shrines were later transformed into places for communal worship, with prayers and songs, but no sacrifices observed. It is possible that communities in remote rural areas needed places for religious practices since pilgrimages to Jerusalem were difficult (Gutmann 1975:73). It is also possible that Psalms 74:8 and Jeremiah 39:8, which mention the destruction of *mo adei-el* and *beth ha-am*, could refer to meeting places (synagogues), but this is not clearly stated in the texts.

2.2.2 A Babylonian origin

The next theory seems to suggest a period around the “exile to Babylon after the destruction of the First Temple (in 586 BCE)” (Douglas and Tenney 2011:1405). The exile is generally seen to have led to the development of local places of worship. The gathering of the displaced Jews in Babylonia, especially for communal worship and instruction, is perceived to have brought about the establishment of the institution later referred to as a synagogue. These gatherings continued when the exiles return to their land (Israel) (Wilson 2006:400; Hachlili 1997:35). Since the Temple had been destroyed and people needed a place to gather for worship because they were desperately in need of fellowship, consolation and instruction, they gathered in different locales (Filson 1944:78). Filson considers it reasonable to conclude that the synagogue came into existence during this period.

It has been stated on the basis of the discoveries of the Dura Europos synagogue that Babylon and not Palestine should be considered the place where this innovation took place, and that this setting contributed to the expansion of the synagogue as a recognised structure (Kraeling 1979:33). Though the attribution of the origin of the synagogue to the Babylonian exile may sound convincing, no direct proof exists that synagogues were present then, and the texts cited as evidence are far from convincing (Saldarini 1989:1080). Ezekiel 11:16²⁴ is, for example, sometimes cited as evidence that a movement existed that established local meetings houses

²⁴ Ezekiel 11:16: “Therefore say: Thus says the Lord God: though I removed them far away among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a little while in the countries where they have gone.”

mainly for worship and the study of the Torah in the absence of the Temple, and that even Ezekiel himself was familiar with such meetings. It is, however, doubtful if the word *miqdash me at* (“diminished” or “lesser” sanctity) refers to a specific alternative to the Temple culture and activities (Fine and Brolley 2009:417).

Another theory for placing the origin of the synagogue in the Babylonian exile, is based on textual evidence that many Jews chose not to return to Jerusalem during the Persian restoration period, even when Cyrus’ decree allowed their return in 538 BCE (Fine and Brolley 2009:417). A document discovered in the archive of the *Murashu* family of merchants contains several dozen names of Jewish origin, some of which involve theophoric formulae incorporating the divine name. This implies that some members of the Jewish community in restoration-era Nippur apparently managed to maintain at least a semblance of their religious identity. Cyrus’ edict (Ezra 1:1-4) and the *Murashu* document could prove that Judeans throughout the Persian Diaspora developed institutional means of addressing the religious, political, and social requirements once addressed primarily by the Temple. Unfortunately, no written or archaeological evidence has been found testifying to the synagogue’s physical existence or cultural role during that period (Hachlili 1997:35; Fine and Brolley 2009:417). It is, however, possible that such places of meeting existed for communal purposes in Babylon during the exile, and that the people may have created them to keep the memory of the Temple worship alive with the intention of rebuilding the Temple one day (Hachlili 1997:35). Without any physical or clear textual evidence, this theory cannot be proven.

2.2.3 A Judean origin after the return from the Babylonian exile

Another noteworthy theory attributes the origin of the synagogue to Judea around the 2nd century BCE. It maintains that the origin of the synagogue is associated with the *Hasmonian* revolution, and the rise of the Pharisees who are believed to have established this important institution as a nonspiritual meeting house. According to this belief, they gathered in houses in order to address the socio-economic challenges of the local communities where they lived, and at the same time read and interpreted the Torah (Zeitlin 1975:21-6). The literary and archaeological indications available suggest that the synagogues that existed in Palestine were a *post-Maccabean* phenomenon (Grabbe 1988:408-10). The evidence mentioned to support

this theory on how the synagogue came into existence, has largely been grounded on semantic investigation, storybook and epigraphy indications, and written basis, or on the use of the words προσευχή, συναγωγή, σπίτι της συνέλευσης (house of assembly) and their interpretations (Hachlili 1997:37). Commenting on this, Levine (1996:427) states that the liturgical activity which includes “listening to God’s word from a prophet, the recital of public prayer or the introduction of scriptural readings”, are understood to have contributed immensely to the development of the synagogue (Levine 1996:427).

2.2.4 An origin in the Second Temple period

Levine (1996:427) suggests the need to revisit the origin of the synagogue from a different angle, stating that instead of exploring the earlier sources for clues about the time and place of the synagogue’s origin, one should rather begin with a period of which more reliable evidence is available about what the synagogue was and how it operated. Equipped with what is known about the synagogue as clearly documented in history, it is possible to work backwards and ask where the activities that were performed in the synagogue took place in earlier periods.

Runesson (2001:167), who uses the reading of the law as model for tracing the origin of the synagogue in his book *Origin of the synagogue: a socio-historical study*, in essence agrees with Levine and states the need to work on a theory based on an already suggested period and location as the time and place of origin of the synagogue, and then put forward a credible explanation as to how and why it originated there. Levine (1996:427) furthermore suggests a more sociological approach by searching for the sociological circumstances of the origin of the synagogue rather than searching for the moment of religious innovation that prognosticated its creation.

For Levine (1996:427-8), the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, especially the 1st century, provide us with an idea of how the synagogue looked and functioned. Runesson (2013:904) also argues that there are indications from the 1st century CE of the widespread distribution of synagogues both in the countryside and municipal areas and from “Galilee and Judea” to the larger Mediterranean world, extending to the northern coasts of the Black Sea. Clearly in this period synagogues were part of a wider pattern of Jewish institutions in the ancient world in which public and religious activities took place (Moon and Punt 2013:5). However, what makes

the institution central in both “Galilee and Judea”, is the presence of public synagogues (the urban and town assemblies) and association synagogues. Literary and archaeological evidence of the presence of the synagogue in the 1st century CE in both Galilee and Judea abound, but not Samaria. However, the presence of a synagogue in Samaria in the Diaspora around the 3rd and 2nd century BCE has been clearly established (Runesson 2013:904).

An important distinction made in the previous paragraph is the one between public synagogues and association synagogues. Public synagogues were common in the 1st century CE and had a wide distribution in both rural and urban areas of Galilee and Judea and in the larger Mediterranean world (Runesson 2013:904). On the other hand, association synagogues, a Jewish form of the Greco-Roman voluntary associations, had its roots in the Diaspora and were run by specific groups of Jews such as the Essenes. As Greco-Roman associations²⁵ created their own community rules and codes of conducts, so did association synagogues have their own rules guiding their membership (Runesson 2013:904). Runesson (2001:231) refers to the association synagogues as “semi-public synagogues”. A public synagogue could also be understood as an open synagogue while the semi-public association synagogue served the needs of a particular group of people.

Lamenting the obscurity of the synagogue origin which will probably never be known as a result of its development in a non-evolutional manner and its importance only being recognised when it was a well-founded institution of the Jews, a fact Levine (2005:2) also notes, Fine and Brolley (2009:418) state that a clue to the purpose of the synagogue can be found in the words for the synagogue used in ancient times, συναγωγή and Σπίτι της Συνέλευσης, which both refer to a gathering, or a house of gathering. It is also suggested that the synagogue as a setting for religious sacraments was a development of the Second Temple period. In view of this, the general inclination towards the existence of smaller religious and communal associations

²⁵ The early Roman Empire is understood to have witnessed a rapid growth of clubs, guilds, and associations of all sorts. In the 2nd century, Roman officials and the enemies of Christianity tended to relate or identify Christianity with clubs and associations. Modern scholars in the 19th century have also speculated that Christianity in Roman times may have imitated the pattern of voluntary associations (e.g. the *collegia tenuiorum*, or burial societies). However, these associations do not explain the local links of the Christian movement. While the Roman associations served internationally popular deities, they functioned as self-contained local phenomena (Meeks 1983:77-80). The synagogue itself incorporated features of both the association and the household (Meeks 1983:80).

alongside the major cults of each city, was assumed by Jews both in Palestine and in the Diaspora. The significance of interpreting the Torah in Second Temple Judaism in the 1st-century period is understood to have played an important role in the advancement of the synagogue. This emphasis on the interpretation of the Scripture is pronounced early in the public ritual of reading and Torah interpreting as designated in Nehemiah 8, a Persian period text that is understood to have had a profound influence upon later synagogue practices (Fine and Brolley 2009:418).

From the discussion above it appears that this new approach of tracing the origin of the synagogue from the 1st century is a promising one. The information available from this period offers us some idea of what the synagogue was like physically and how it functioned in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods (Levine 1996:427). It seems that synagogues could be found everywhere in 1st-century society, but usually only where there were enough Jews to maintain one. In large Jewish centres, there would have been many synagogues (Douglas and Tenney 2011:1406). Limited as it may be, the amount of data available to support this is far from insignificant. Josephus and Philo (1.1) mention the synagogue explicitly. While the former's allusions to communal activities in the Diaspora are sparse and often legendary, they are, however, by far the most valuable descriptions we have of this period. Rabbinic literature refers to 1st-century synagogues in several early 3rd-century collections. Several focus on pre-70 Jerusalem, but only one provides a surprisingly detailed description of the 1st-century synagogue in Alexandria (Douglas and Tenney 2011:1406).

2.3 Archaeology and the origin of the synagogue

The archaeological evidence of 1st-century synagogues is relatively meagre. Only two buildings in the Diaspora, those in Delos and Ostia, have been dated to the period around the 1st century (Levine 2003:6). However, Matassa (2018:2), in her analysis of the invention of the synagogue in the 1st century which focussed on the existence of synagogue buildings in Delos, Jericho, Heridium, Masada and Gamla in this period, states that while there are a good number of passages about Jesus and his disciples preaching in the synagogue in both Israel and Diaspora, there is still no evidence of any physical structures linked to Jesus that can be clearly

identified as synagogues. She acknowledges the presence of the Jews in these places and their attendance of gatherings for religious and other communal purposes (Matassa 2018:15-6).

Levine (2003:6, 7) and Ryan (2016:135-6) are of the opinion that for Judea the picture is somewhat better, and that the list of possible synagogue buildings has grown steadily in the last decade. The buildings at Gamla, Masada, and Herodium have long been regarded as early synagogues, though suggestions that the buildings at Capernaum, Chorazim, Magdala and Jericho are synagogues, have met with greater scepticism. Recently, communal buildings found at three sites in Western Judea's coastal plain opened a new chapter in the study of Judean synagogues in the 1st and early 2nd centuries CE.²⁶ According to Charlesworth (2006:28-9), the majority of scholars have concluded that archaeologists have uncovered 1st-century synagogues in Palestine. He himself is persuaded by the fact that the reading of the Torah was part of the synagogue worship before 70 CE and that the New Testament also bears witness to how Jesus read the Torah in the synagogue in Palestine.

Dunn (2006:220) also points to references to buildings that were set aside for communal gatherings referred to as either synagogues or prayer houses. Synagogue (συναγωγή) as a term appears in important epigraphic evidence like the Greek writings of Theodotus discovered in Jerusalem and dated around the 1st century. The Theodotus inscription mentions a synagogue that was constructed primarily for the reading of the Torah and the studying of the commandments. Josephus²⁷ is understood to have referred to synagogues at Caesarea and Dora. There are references in the New Testament²⁸ to how both Jesus and Paul frequented the

²⁶ One can rightly ask, on what basis are these structures identified or viewed as synagogues? The answer has to do with our understanding of the 1st-century synagogue in general and those in Judaea specifically. These buildings served first and foremost as communal buildings. At this stage, however, synagogue buildings bore no expression of their religious dimension, neither architecturally, artistically, nor epigraphically. Several synagogue buildings, in Judaea at least, seem to have been modelled, as noted, after Hellenistic communal institutions such as the βουλευτήριον or ἐκκλησιαστήριον. The 1st-century synagogue was where all communal affairs were addressed. Synagogue is thus the most appropriate name for such an institution, indicating a place for gathering with no overt religious connotations. To summarise, the synagogue at this time can be identified as the largest, and often the only, public building in a Jewish town or village (Levine 2003:7).

²⁷ Bell Jud 2.284-291; Antiq 14.213–214.

²⁸ Luke 4:14-16; Acts 13:4-5, 13-15.

synagogue (Hachlili 1997:38-9; Kloppenborg 2006:253; Matasa 2018:16-20). Physical evidence of this period, is also significant – the buildings at Gamla, Masada, and Herodium are usually identified as synagogues, although the latter two are dated at the end of this period, that is the first Jewish revolt against Rome around 66-74 CE. The Gamla building²⁹ was constructed at the beginning of the 1st century.

Diaspora synagogues include the synagogue in Delos and an early stage of the synagogue at Ostia (Levine 1996:429). Further evidence from the Diaspora is epigraphical in nature and includes a dozen references to the Egyptian προσευχή in three major inscriptions from Cyrene, numerous inscriptions from the catacombs of Rome, and at least one of significance from 1st-century Asia Minor (Levine 2003:7). The epigraphic evidence regarding a 1st-century synagogue in Jerusalem is particularly valuable (e.g. the well-known Theodotus inscription from Jerusalem), even though it is not as numerous as those of the Diaspora synagogues. It is thus apparent from the epigraphical evidence that synagogues were present in Palestine and the Diaspora during the 1st century.

Architecturally, the building style of the synagogue was common throughout the Hellenistic and later Roman ages. Horsley (1996:139) notes how buildings and synagogues in Galilee were patterned after Roman civic buildings. There is also a reference to a man who was walking along a street and bowed down before a building thinking it was a synagogue, only to realise later that it was a pagan temple (b. Sabb. 72b). This implies that synagogue buildings followed the building pattern of the society in which they were situated. The synagogue was surrounded by a small wall creating a courtyard in which the crowd gathered. There are indications that suggest that during the primeval period people often gathered outdoors. However, there are also indications that, occasionally, they gathered in rooms. In these usually small rooms men and women sat together but probably on different seats (White 2009:652). In the glorious “Moorish” and the “Italian” synagogue, women occupied a gallery on both sides of the room leading to the upper staircases (White 2009:652).

Likewise, in Palestine, especially places like Masada and Capernaum, “stone seats in the form of a double tier ran the length of three walls” and men and women did not sit together, with

²⁹ The synagogue at Gamla in the Golan Heights is the largest of the extant public synagogue remains. Its main hall measures 20 x 16 metres and features several additional rooms (Ryan 2016:136).

women seated in a different gallery (White 2009:652). According to Binder (1999:376), this separation may have been dispensed with as an inconvenience. However, the possibility remains that in at least some synagogues the separation was maintained, either through holding services at different times, especially on the Sabbath, or by seating men and women on opposite sides during the service.

Many buildings in the Roman age are typical of the Corinthian Greek strategy of buildings with spaces at the entrance with free vertical pillars in front to support the curved ceiling (White 2009:652). Like the Temple, the overall design of the synagogue separated the Holiest arena from the Holy one with a curtain. It also contained a raised table at the centre for reading. In prayer, the worshipper faced the Temple Mount in Jerusalem³⁰ (Spero 2004:61; White 2009:652), so prayers were said facing Jerusalem. Archaeologically there are indications that the direction towards Jerusalem was important. Likewise, the place where the Torah was placed, also determined the direction the synagogue faced. This meant that the worshippers prayed facing the Torah and thus facing Jerusalem (Hachlili 1997:45). By the time the style of the synagogue structure was established, the synagogue was often positioned in the centre of the market square (White 2009:652). This position reflected the importance of the building for the community.

2.4 Different names for synagogues

Both in the Diaspora and Palestine, synagogues differed in terms of their layout, architectural plan, and location. Synagogues were also called by different names; most often the term used was συναγωγή, which means a place of gathering, or προσευχή, which refers to a place of prayer (Levine 1996:429-30). There is also epigraphical evidence from Egypt showing that the προσευχή was known as early as the 3rd century BCE and that it was analogous to the location of prayer places known from the writings of the 1st-century Egyptian scholar Philo of Alexandria (Moses 2.216; Flaccus 7.44). A Jewish place of prayer from around the 1st century

³⁰ References in the opening paragraphs of the tractate *Megillah*, which was part of the “Talmudic” instructions of Judaism, suggests that synagogues were not initially constructed so that worshippers could face Jerusalem while praying. Initially the general practice was to build the synagogue on an important site, sometimes close to the water, but usually so that the back wall fronted Jerusalem (White 2009:652).

CE was also discovered on the Greek island Delos, though the structure does not have clear Jewish symbols or characteristics that allow it to be identified unambiguously as a synagogue (Fine and Brolley 2009:418; Saldarini 1989:1080). This multiplicity of names may indicate different perceptions regarding the essential nature and function of the synagogue. It is thus conceivable that this institution served different purposes in different locales, with most in the Diaspora named προσευχή (Levine 1996:430).

The dominance of the two terms προσευχή and συναγωγή may reflect two different emphases. Synagogues in the Diaspora seem to have had a religious dimension and may even have acquired a measure of sanctity that was unknown in contemporary Palestine (Levine 1996:30). The Theodotos inscriptions³¹ and Philo's,³² and Josephus's³³ descriptions of the Essenes state that reading, expounding and teaching Torah, stood at the centre of activities (Runesson 2013:904). This may have been due to its unique context, inter alia, being distant from the Jerusalem Temple and surrounded by pagan religious models. Apart from that, the need of the Jews in the Diaspora to express themselves explicitly in religious terms as being different from pagan religions, undoubtedly also had an impact on the establishment of synagogues in the Diaspora.

The synagogue in Palestine was simply a place of gathering and a communal institution that did not need to differentiate itself from other religion's institutions (Levine 1996:430). It should,

³¹ "Theodotos, son of Vettenos, who was both a priest and a leader of the synagogue, son of a synagogue leader (ἀρχισυναγώγων) and grandson of a synagogue leader, structured the synagogue for the reading of the Torah and studying of the commandments, and as a hostel with chambers and water installations to provide for the needs of itinerants from abroad, which his father, the elder (Πρεσβυτέρος) and Simonides founded" (pl. 1:Rockefeller inv. S842=CIJ 1404).

³² "For that day has been set apart to be holy and on it they abstain from all other work and proceed to sacred places that they call synagogues. There, arranged in rows according to their ages, the younger below the elder, they sit decorously as befits the occasion with attentive ears. Then one takes the books and reads aloud and another of especial proficiency comes forward and expounds that which is not understood" (Pro 81-82).

³³ "for he [Moses] did not suffer the guilt of ignorance to go on without punishment, but demonstrated the law to be the best and the most necessary instruction of all others, permitting the people to leave off their other employments, and to assemble together for the hearing of the law, and learning it exactly, and this not once or twice, or oftener, but every week; which thing all the other legislators seem to have neglected." (Ap 2.175).

however, be taken into consideration that προσευχή was also used in the Hellenistic world to refer to a pagan loyalty sanctuary, while συναγωγή was exclusively used for Jewish organisations or buildings (Hachlili 1997:39).

The evidence available shows that when studying the synagogue, we are dealing with a communal institution. With benches along most of the walls, the focus of each building was on the centre of its halls, as was the plan of contemporary Hellenistic and Roman communal buildings (Ryan 2016:140; Levine 1996:431). The features in the present-day building that came to be linked with a synagogue, and which reflect its predominant religious character, are also absent in earlier buildings. These include the lack of an orientation towards Jerusalem, place for a Torah shrine, decorative elements of religious significance, and dedicatory inscriptions showing the significance status accorded to the building. But this does not repudiate the significant role the Second Temple played in the religious life of the people, featuring prayers, Torah reading, reading from the Prophets, recitation of the Targum and sermons (Levine 1996:31, 33).

From the discussion above, our understanding of the Second Temple period is founded on epigraphy, narratives of the time, and archaeological discoveries. But with all this information at our disposal, not much can be said about the presence of the synagogue before the demolition of the Temple (Hachlili 1997:40; Saldarini 1989:1080).

The public edifices from the period that have been discovered, especially in the Land of Israel, include Gamla, Masada, Herodium, Arpernahum, and another, which is now no longer in existence. The structures excavated can be identified as synagogues based on their architectural resemblances. According to Hachlili (1997:41), they share the following features: a square hall separated by rows of pillars into a central space and air corridor, with seats around the four walls of the hall facing the central area. The edifices seem to have been erected around the same period in the 1st century except Gamla, which was probably built towards the end of the 1st century. The buildings were probably single storied.

From the above it can be concluded that uncovering the origin of the synagogue remains an elusive task. However, there is increasing consensus among scholars suggesting the development of the synagogue in the 1st century despite the position of Matasa as noted above. Architecture and terms used for the buildings also suggest the existence of the synagogue in the 1st century. According Runesson (2001:169), based on the available archaeological

evidence, the synagogue in the 1st century was a deeply rooted institution, the unparalleled centre of the social and religious life of every community.

2.5 The intertestamental period and the synagogue in the Diaspora

The existence of synagogues in the Diaspora was briefly mentioned in 2.3. Apart from differences among scholars regarding the nature of its emergence,³⁴ there is broad agreement regarding the existence of the synagogue in the Diaspora (Binder 1999:228-30; White 2009:651; Fine and Brolley 2009:425). According to Binder (1999:227), the “synagogue existed throughout the Jewish Diaspora in the first century CE and shared many of the same functions with their Palestinian counterpart”. Around the period between the Old and the New Testament, there was a vast growth in the number of synagogues as noted in documents from the period between the two testaments.

The language of the service held in the synagogues became Aramaic as the Persian Empire rose and fell and the fundamental independence of Israelite kingship became a thing of the past. The intonation of prayers and the interpretation of the Old Testament text was at the heart of the worship. Administratively, those who oversaw the synagogue as officers, were given titles in the Hellenistic period. The synagogue as an institution became the centre of the Jewish community and a home of worship in the days of Jesus (White 2009:651). Fine and Brolley (2009:425) record that, according to literary and archaeological sources, some 150 synagogues existed in the Diaspora. These synagogues conformed to the architectural models of the places where they were located (Fine and Brolley 2009:425).

The evolution of religious organisations in Palestine resembled similar institutions among the scattered Jews. Large halls were built in Dura Europos and several parts of Egypt. The Jews in

³⁴ White argues that the diversity of the architecture of Diaspora synagogues is due to most of them being existing buildings that were adapted to serve a religious function. According to White, four or five of the six early Diaspora synagogues (Dura-Europos, Stobi, Priene, Sardis, Delos, and Ostia), were originally private homes and probably all were housed in private buildings at some stage (White 1987:135). Binder (1999:228-9) questions this view claiming it lacks support from data. Binder, who appears to support the view of Richardson who proposes that the synagogue emerged in the Diaspora as *collegia* or voluntary religious society, also suggests that Richardson’s view needs further refinement.

Diaspora (Acts 2:9-11) probably worshipped in various synagogues located in different places. Several ancient synagogues have been found in Palestine and Syria, as well as in the neighbouring domains of the Eastern Mediterranean world. There may have been hundreds of them towards the close of the 2nd century CE (White 2009:651).

Binder (1990:336), who discusses the existence of the synagogue in the Diaspora extensively, underlines the cordial relationship that existed between the Temple and synagogues as the synagogues served as collection places for the temple tax in Jerusalem. According to him, this sum of money sent to Jerusalem was a substantial one as sources mention 100 pounds of gold that were collected from Jewish offerings in Apamea, while 20 pounds were collected at Laodicea. Places like Antioch and Alexandria, with even larger Jewish populations, were able to send even greater amounts. This clearly indicates the major role the synagogue played in the Diaspora in a massive economic system that was centred on the Temple cult in Jerusalem (Binder 1999:336). This indicates that the Jews in Diaspora were very eager to see that their contributions reached the Temple in Jerusalem. Every time their transport was interfered with, the local communities appealed to the highest strata of imperial government to secure their privilege of sending their funds to Jerusalem. This indicates just how committed the Diaspora synagogues were to fulfill their biblical obligation to the national shrine. Thus, it appears that the relationship between the synagogues in the Diaspora and the Jerusalem Temple was cordial and viewing the synagogue as a rival of the Temple in Jerusalem is not justified (Levine 1996:441).

While priestly leadership was hereditary in the Temple cult, it was not hereditary in the synagogue (Runesson 2013:905). This does not, however, mean that priests were not involved in the leadership of the synagogues. Binder (1999:360) argues in this regard that the Galilean synagogues were modelled after the Temple in Israel and, just like in the Temple, priests felt at home in the synagogue.

Hachlili (1997:36), in reflecting on the sacrificial role of the Temple, however, states that its role differed from that of the synagogue in that the synagogue, unlike the Temple, did not offer sacrifices. Binder (1999:360) makes the same argument. While priests offered sacrifices in the Temple, in the synagogue they only offered what can be described as the “sacrifice of the lips”. From this, it may be correct to assume that what is referred to as lip sacrifice took the place of the normal sacrifices that were offered in the Temple setting. It also implies that there was no

conflict between the two institutions and that priestly participation and leadership simply reflected their role as religious and communal leaders at the time. There is also no indication that the synagogue as late as the 1st century CE was anything more than a community centre, for it was not endowed with any special sanctity or *halakhic* importance (Levine 1996:441).

To conclude, by the end of the Second Temple period, synagogues thrived throughout the empire, serving as consecrated houses of worship and community centres for their constituents. The existence of these synagogues provided a means for Diaspora Jews to be connected to the central sanctuary while living in distant cities throughout the larger Greco-Roman world (Binder 1999:341). This conclusion is in line with Philo's statement that even when the Diaspora Jews saw their adopted country as their fatherland, they nevertheless held the Holy City, where the sacred Temple stood, to be their mother city. Because the Jews in the Diaspora received spiritual inspiration from the Holy City, in return, there was a continual flow of representatives and visitors from Palestine and beyond bringing alms, sacrifices and burnt offerings on behalf of their people to the Jerusalem Temple. In view of this, it is certain that the Temple drew some of its support from the Jews in Diaspora, while the Jews in Diaspora sustained their Jewish distinctiveness through their link with the Temple. The two (Temple and the synagogue), enjoyed a synergetic relationship, whereby both synagogue and Temple flourished within this circle of worship and its source in Jerusalem. This supports the view that the synagogue as institution was not seen as a rival of the Temple (Binder 1999:341; Levine 1996:441). An object representing the Temple discovered in a Galilean synagogue can be seen as physical evidence of the positive attitude that characterised the relationship of the synagogue and the Temple. Further archaeological evidence is the discovery of Second Temple period synagogue artwork that depicts the Temple on a carved limestone piece, known as the Magdala Stone. Though its function is not known, there is wide agreement in current scholarship that the face of the stone reflects Temple imagery. These images of the Temple in a synagogue affirm that the synagogue and the Temple were not seen as opposed. Both were important institutions for and symbols of Jewish identity formation and community organisation, as well as Jewish religion and politics (Ryan 2016:140-5).

The existence and establishment of the synagogue in both Palestine and Diaspora during the 1st-century period has been well established; it is thus justified to say that the synagogue came to be well known in this period. However, there is evidence of the emergence of the synagogue

in Egypt around the 3rd century BCE (Griffith 1987:20). It therefore cannot be claimed that the synagogue only originated in the 1st-century period.

2.6 The role of communal institutions in the Greco-Roman world

As observed earlier, the reason behind the creation of the synagogue by a local Jewish community, was the need for a central institution that would provide a variety of ministries or services to the community.³⁵ This is because the basic word meaning “synagogue” in Greek, συναγωγή, refers to assemblies for judicial, communal or political purposes, and for Jewish communities for communal prayer or the study of the law (Cohen 1999:91; 2016:318). In view of this, as noted earlier, the synagogue became firmly rooted in Jewish communities of late antiquity as the Jewish communal centre par excellence. This understanding of the role of the synagogue resulted in some Jews giving the institution the name “house of people” (Levine 2005:381). It is therefore important to investigate to what extent the synagogue fulfilled the diverse needs of a community, and not just those of religious teaching and worship. This is important because of the interchange between religion and human activity in the ancient Greco-Roman world.³⁶ The Greco-Roman temples were not just intended for offering of prayers and sacrifices, they also formed the areas around which many civic activities were carried out (Binder 1999:389; Levine 2005:390).

In placing these civic activities in and around temples, the Romans were essentially emulating their Greek compatriots who had long before adopted such customs. In terms of function, the Greek *agora* with its various temples and their adjoining *stoas*, served as treasuries, markets, civic meeting places, public archives, and so forth. The same pattern emerged in the eastern half of the Mediterranean following the defeat of Alexander the Great. The Temple court in

³⁵ This supports the observation that the relationship between the synagogue’s origin and function cannot be separated. The synagogue came into existence to meet various needs of the community of Jews in Diaspora and in Palestine.

³⁶ It is understood that in the ancient Greco-Roman world, religious activities were not limited to a narrow, privatised sphere, but cut across politics, warfare, family life, and just about everything else within the realm of human endeavour. The Roman emperor was not merely the emperor, but was at the same time the Pontifex Maximus, the high priest of the nation. In the same manner, Roman legions as a matter of policy travelled with *augures* or priests, who took the auspices before battles or other major events (Binder 1999:389).

Jerusalem probably served as the primary civic centre of the city, with the Temple shrine serving as the house of the Jewish deity (1 Kgs 8:17; Ezra 6:3).

2.7 The broader role of the synagogue

The terms συναγωγή (place of gathering), προσευχή (place of prayer), τὸ ἱερόν (the sanctuary), εὐχέιον (place of prayer), σαββατεῖον (Sabbath meeting place), διδασκαλεῖον (place of instruction), *templum*, and amphitheatre may provide insights regarding the essential nature and functioning of the synagogue (Levine 1996:429-30; Cohen 1999:91). It is also possible that this institution served somewhat different purposes in different milieus. It is worthwhile noting that these names arose in Diaspora, while the name for this institution in Palestine, with one exception, was always συναγωγή (Levine 1996:430). The two main terms, συναγωγή and προσευχή, may reflect two differing backgrounds. The latter appears to clearly indicate that synagogues in Diaspora featured a religious dimension and may have even acquired a measure of sanctity that was absent in contemporary Palestine (Levine 1996:430). This development might have been due to its exceptional context, inter alia, being far from the Jerusalem Temple and surrounded by pagan religious models. Furthermore, the greater need of the Jews in Diaspora was expressed clearly in religious-communal terms alongside their pagan environments, which indisputably also had an influence on the way of life, nature and emphasis of the Diaspora synagogues (Levine 1996:430).

The Palestinian synagogue, on the other hand, was exceptional, not only because it was referred to almost exclusively by one term, συναγωγή, which did not have a distinct religious connotation. Instead, the synagogue in Palestine is often described as a place primarily for social gathering and as a communal institution (Levine 1996:430; Olsson 2003:31). It is possible that the synagogue in Palestine as a communal institution partially had its roots in the gatherings at the city gate³⁷ and the many communal functions these gatherings fulfilled, instead of the Temple and its functions. The name synagogue itself, according to Levine (2003:7), is most appropriate for an institution of this nature, indicating a place for gathering

³⁷ The city gate will be discussed in 2.8.1 to present a clear picture of its function.

without an exclusive religious connotation. A Palestine synagogue was therefore the largest, and often the only, public building in a Jewish town or village.

Given this widespread diversity among Palestinian and Diaspora 1st-century synagogues, the question arises, what was the common denominator among them? What features or functions were regarded as core functions? Levine (1996:430) and Rosenfeld and Meniray (1999:259) argue that the synagogue attended to all the needs of a community. Its functions included hosting political meetings, social gatherings, courts, schools, hostels, charity activities, slave manumissions, and meals (sacred or otherwise), while it also fulfilled some religious-liturgical functions. In terms of religious-liturgical functions, Levine (1996:430) and Rosenfeld and Meniray (1999:259) all refer to the study of the Torah and the saying of prayers. It is thus apparent that the synagogue played a variety of roles to meet the political, social and religious needs of the people.

Having given an overview of the function of the synagogue as submitted above, and the function thereof as explained by Levine, and Rosenfeld and Meniray, the various elements will now be expanded on.

2.7.1 Reading and exposition of Scripture in the synagogue

The first function of the synagogue as the gathering place for the reading and exposition of Scripture is generally accepted (Cohen 1999:89; Binder 1999:399). Kloppenborg (2006:278), for example, mentions that the Theodotos inscription explicitly lists the teaching of the Torah as a primary function of the synagogue. The exposition of Scripture (Torah) as a central act of congregational worship continues to the present day (Feinberg 1996:1143; White 2009:657). Griffith (1987:12-130) also refers to how both Philo and Josephus emphasise the importance of the instruction on the Torah in the synagogue. The Torah was subdivided into 154 (or 155) units and was read within a three-year-cycle (White 2009:657). The selection was as *sedarim*, as proven by the writings of Josephus³⁸, the New Testament, and the patristic authors (White

³⁸ “for he [Moses] did not suffer the guilt of ignorance to go on without punishment, but demonstrated the law to be the best and the most necessary instruction of all others, permitting the people to leave off their other employments, and to assemble together for the hearing of the law, and learning it exactly, and this not once or twice, or oftener, but every week; which thing

2009:657). This is also supported by literary, epigraphical and archaeological evidence³⁹ (Binder 1999:399). The Pentateuch was highly valued and respected as the true Word of God. As far as this system is concerned, a high degree of personal responsivity and competency was demanded.

Sometime around the Second Temple period the custom arose of using the Sabbath as a communal time for instruction in the Torah. The reading of the Torah by Ezra at the rededication of the Temple probably served as a model for this practice (Neh 8:9). The extension of the Torah-reading comprised the inclusion of reading from the Prophets (Feinberg 1996:1143). The recitation of the prophetic writings in the synagogues is most explicit in Luke 4:16-21, portraying Jesus reading a portion of the book of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth. Though this passage is understood as a Lukan composition, its portrayal of the Isaiah reading appears to reflect the practice of reading from the Prophets in the synagogues of 1st-century Palestine (Binder 1999:399-400).

2.7.2 Prayer

From the discussion above it appears that scholars agree that the synagogue was a place for the reading and explication of Scripture. However, Binder (1999:404) points out, the consensus amongst scholars does not appear to extend to the role of prayer in the synagogue (White 2009:657; Cohen 1999:89; Yamauchi 1992:784; Feinberg 1996:1143; Ritter 2015:101-5).

all the other legislators seem to have neglected.” (Ap 2.175). According to him, weekly gatherings centred on the learning of the custom and the Law and the Law became the most excellent and essential form of the study in the synagogue (Antiq 16.43; Antiq 4.12).

³⁹ In part, one can attribute the frequent appearance of this function in our sources to the distinctiveness of this Jewish custom. Other religions had their sacred writings, but these documents were typically reserved for the priests and never read in public. As Josephus was quick to point out to his Gentile readers, Jews did not make a secret of the precepts to which they adhered, but published them openly among the people (Antiq 16.43). Nor can the Jewish Scriptures be compared with the various philosophical writings debated by groups such as the Stoics. For the Jews, the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch) are the very Word of God. Most also accepted the divine status of the prophetic books and writings. As far as this view is concerned, the correct knowledge of the books of the Law, and the traditions therein, played an important role in maintaining the right relationship with God and others (Binder 1999:399).

According to Kloppenburg (2006:279), prayer was one of the functions of the synagogue in Galilee and other places outside Jerusalem. Griffith (1987:5-6) also emphasises that prayer was a key function of the synagogue. Philo consistently refers to the meeting places of the Jews as προσευχαί, with only two references to them as συναγωγαί, asserting how the Jews prayed together as a community (Legat 311; Vit Mos 2.23-24).

Given the evidence of the commonness of prayer in the ancient Near East, Binder (1999:406) is of the opinion that, even if prayer is not clearly mentioned as an element of worship in the synagogue, it was a common practice in the synagogue. According to him, if gentiles could begin their public assemblies with prayers “how much more would Jews have incorporated prayer within their weekly synagogue gatherings?” (Binder 1999:406).⁴⁰

The incorporation of prayers is supported by the argument that the recitation of the Shema and its accompanying blessings was a key aspect of the synagogue service (Yamauchi 1992:782). According to White (2009:657), this prayer, which underscores the monotheism of Yahweh, was established by Moses himself. It was used as a general blessing and originated earlier than the Christian era. When said in a service, the Shema was always followed by an “Amen” by the entire congregation. It was prayed facing Jerusalem.

Wilson (2006:400), reflecting on how the Babylonian captivity brought changes to the Jewish religion after they lost their land, Temple and cultic ministration, argues that the Jews adopted a non-sacrificial religion. They started assembling in homes for the reading of Torah, prayers and instructions, but not the offering of sacrifices. He views these gatherings in homes as the beginning of the synagogue and its practices. According to him, in these gatherings, prayers took the place of sacrifice and what he calls “lip sacrifice” (prayers like the Shema) became central to the life of Jewish piety.

In view of the above evidence regarding the existence of prayer as part of the function of the synagogue, it can be agreed with Binder and Wilson that it is possible to accept that communal

⁴⁰ Binder links the prayers that were said in the synagogue with the saying of prayers when sacrificing in the ancient Near East. He describes a typical pattern in which the king, or the high priest, would pray on behalf of the people and then direct the offering of the sacrifice. For example, on the morning of the triumph following the Jewish War, Vespasian rose and, covering most of his head with his mantle, recited the customary prayers. Titus is understood to have prayed in the same manner (Binder 1999:405). The link made by Binder is, however, a debateable one since there were no sacrifices made in synagogues.

prayers were commonly carried out within the synagogue of Palestine and the Diaspora during the Second Temple period. In addition to functioning as a place of communal prayer on the Sabbath, it is possible that the synagogue also remained available during the rest of the week for individual prayers (Binder 1999:413-4).

2.7.3 Festivals, holy days and communal dining

In considering festivals, holy days⁴¹ and communal dining⁴² as part of the function of the synagogue, White (2009:658) states that the Old Testament festivals of the Jewish religious calendar were observed according to the agricultural year. This confirms the proposition that the ancient Jews divided not only space, but also time, into categories of sacred and profane. Buildings, days, weeks and months were set aside for religious purposes (Binder 1999:415).⁴³ For Binder, this was not only limited to Jews in Jerusalem and pilgrims, but also to Jews all over the world who could participate in the worship and receive the divine favour of those who worshipped in the central sanctuary. According to him, it was not necessary for the Diaspora Jews in the Mediterranean world to go to the Temple in Jerusalem, as many of these feasts could have been practiced and observed in the local synagogue at the same date and time as in the Temple ceremonies. According to Binder (1999:415), in the *προσευχαί* of Alexandria, during the Jewish observance of Sukkoth, the Jews were effectively transported to the inner

⁴¹ In the ancient world, festive holidays and the celebration of important events by honouring the gods was very significant in the private and social lives of the people. Both in the Diaspora and in Jerusalem, the Jews were especially known for their strict observance of their feasts which gave them a particular and regular “pattern to the days, weeks, months and years”. The New Testament, especially the gospels, mentions the “feasts of unleavened bread, Passover, Weeks, Tabernacle, Dedication, Purim and New Moon”. These seem to have been celebrated in Jesus’ time. There were also seasonal feasts associated with, for example, a royal birthday celebration, enthronement of kings, military conquests, birth of a child, completion of structures including temples, marriage ceremonies, and shearing of sheep (Twelftree 2013:270-1).

⁴² Regarding the practice of the synagogue in the Diaspora, Twelftree (2013:272) argues that meals were a common aspect of the synagogue’s activities.

⁴³ The tradition of dividing a year into sacred and profane times, was not limited to the Jewish tradition. It is understood that during the early empire, the Romans also observed nearly a hundred separate festivals each year. During these festivals, communal sacrifices were offered, and no official business could be lawfully done (Binder 1999:415).

courts of the Temple as the high priest offered the customary sacrifice and blessed the assembled multitude. The view of Binder is supported by Josephus (Ant 14.213-215) in his reflection on Julius Caius writing to the senate on the need to reverse the decision that forbade the Jews from keeping their annual Jewish holy days.

In view of this, the synagogue as an institution provided the platform whereby distance was overcome, giving the Jews in Diaspora the opportunity to take their rightful place and fit in the larger community of Israel as they fulfilled their religious mandate on the specified sacred days as commanded in the Torah. According to White (2009:658), a small remnant of the great sacrifices of the atonement were also observed in the Diaspora while the observance of Passover was limited to the household observance thereof.

According to Binder (1999:426), the common observance of the traditional feasts points to the intersection of temporal and spatial dimensions, where sacred time and sacred space came together linking the Temple to synagogues around the world. It also appears as if synagogues were treated like temples by some Jews and considered as such by gentiles who used the term “temple” for the synagogue at Syrian Antioch.

It is probable that sacrifices were offered in or near synagogues in the Diaspora, but this is denied by Wilson (2006:400) as, according to him, prayers, which he refers to as “lip sacrifice”, took the place of blood sacrifices and even the functions of the synagogue. While the claim that sacrifices were part of the function of the synagogue lacks reliable support, it can be accepted that the synagogue occupied an important role in meeting the social, economic and the religious needs of Jews in Palestine and in the Diaspora.

2.7.4 Treasury

In the Greco-Roman world, temples customarily served as banks and treasuries for both the general public and private funds (Jocz 2009:923; Binder 1999:426). The role of treasury was therefore a common feature of most of the ancient sanctuaries.

According to Binder (1999:426), the rationale behind this system was that money kept in the sanctuary was believed to be under the protection of the deity residing therein. As always, the Jerusalem Temple was a bit different to its pagan counterparts in terms of assuming the role of

a sacred repository. The monies kept in the Temple were sacred funds partly donated by the Jews who were scattered all over the world (2 Macc 3:10-11). The main source of this money was the annual payment of the two denarii temple tax by Jews over the age of 20. Though Jews in Palestine also contributed to this fund, the greater part of this money came from the Jews in the Diaspora, since the Diaspora was the home of a good number of Jews (Binder 1999:427). Like their counterparts in the Diaspora, the synagogues in Palestine also served as local storehouses for sacred offerings destined for the Temple. This is apparent from Josephus' remark that "if any be caught stealing their holy books, or their sacred money, whether it be out of the synagogue [Sabbath meeting] or public school, he shall be deemed a sacrilegious person, and his goods shall be brought into the public treasury of the Romans" (Antiq 16.164). Certain imperial decrees and literary allusions also indicate that the synagogues in the Diaspora served as the storehouses of this money. For example, Marcus Agrippa is understood to have written to the magistrates in Ephesus that if any man was found guilty of stealing the sacred money of the Jews and then took refuge in a place of asylum, according to the decree such a person should be dragged away from them and turned over to the Jews under the same law by which temples were protected (Binder 1999:426-7). The culprits should be considered as temples-robbers because they stole from the temple or the synagogue. Legally, the decree of Augustus and the letter written by Agrippa officially recognised that the Asian synagogue was as unfringeable grounds (Antiq 16.167-168). This indicates that they were protected, also from the theft of their possessions, such as their holy books.

Charity in the synagogues was in line with the ancient Jewish tradition of giving in order to help the poor, the widows, and the orphans.⁴⁴ These passages about charity may refer to the simple offering of money to a beggar at the door of a synagogue or to the gathering of the so-called third tithe, which was mainly for travellers, widows, and orphans. In Deuteronomy 14:28-9, Moses charges the Israelites to collect this tithe every third year and to store it in their towns. If the tithes in earlier times were collected at the city gates in Palestine, the same function may have been carried over to the synagogue in a later period (Binder 1999:429). Therefore, as mentioned above, one can argue that the synagogue as an institution assumed one of the key functions of the Temple in Jerusalem, which is being a storehouse for funds to be used for charity.

⁴⁴ Exodus 22:25; 23:11; Deuteronomy 26:12-13; Isaiah 58:7-10.

2.7.5 Museum, archive and school

Ancient synagogues functioned as museums,⁴⁵ archives and schools. The function of an ancient museum was related to that of a treasury. However, while the latter housed the sacred donations in an area prohibited to the public, the former displayed these gifts openly for all to see. In the ancient world, walking through a temple was walking through a museum as a sacred place, as these shrines were filled with all manner of statues, shields, altars, inscriptions, or other types of supplicatory offerings (Binder 1999:430; Mohr 2010:620). This was done not only to attract the attention of visitors, but also the gods in the shrine. The gods were expected to look upon the donors of the pious offerings with favour and answer their prayers (Binder 1999:430).

Votive offerings were common among the Jews in Palestine and those in Diaspora. The Jews in Diaspora seem to have been particularly keen on sending votive offerings to the central sanctuary in Jerusalem with synagogues serving as places where supplicatory offerings were kept before being sent to Jerusalem. These votive offerings were either from the Jewish communities or individuals. In synagogues like those in Berenice, Delos, and Acmonia, inscriptions were set up in honour of benefactors with the sole aim of displaying the pious deeds of benefactors (Binder 1999:431).

Supplicatory offerings were often accompanied by decrees that, while addressed to human beings, were presented in the temple to gain a divine hearing. The decrees were often inscribed on stone monuments or bronze pillars and placed in the temple for public display. The result was that temples also functioned as archives⁴⁶ for the preservation of public documents (Binder 1999:432).

⁴⁵ Even though the museum is understood to be a modern institution, its history reaches back into antiquity. In the ancient world collections were first kept in temples and rulers' palaces, and later in private houses. While rulers validated themselves by displaying the spoils of war, trophies and tributes, temples became depositories of dedicatory gifts and votive offerings. Well-known treasure houses of the Greek cities and in the holy temples include the Apollos Sanctuary at Delphi and the sacred areas of Delos and Olympia. The erection of monuments honouring people at these sacred places unintentionally changed them into open air museums (Mohr 2010:620).

⁴⁶ Archives were common among the people of the ancient Near East from the 2nd millennium BCE. The Babylonian and Assyrian kingdoms kept records of their royal deeds, as did the Persians (Ezra 2:23; 6:1). Temples and palaces contained storehouses for such records. The locations of the Persian archives include Ecbatana (Ezra 6:2) and Babylon (where the Cyrus

The Temple in Jerusalem served as the central archive for Jewish public laws and notifications. Traditionally, the Jews maintained that the Ten Commandments were given to Moses on two tablets and that these were placed inside the Ark of the Covenant and kept in the Holy of Holies (Ex 25:16; 2 Chr 5:7-10). Apart from the Ten Commandments, other laws were also preserved in the Temple. The book of 1 Maccabees contains a decree passed by the Jewish people that Simon and his offspring retain the position of the high priest in perpetuity till a trustworthy prophet should arise (1 Macc 14:27-45). The same book shows that a decree of Demetrius II granting privileges to the Jews was kept in a conspicuous place in the Temple (1 Macc 11:37).

The ancient world did not differentiate between secular and religious education, and the synagogue also served as a religious archive for the studying and teaching of the Torah (Runesson 2013:904). The Torah scroll would probably have been placed in a position of honour such as inside a wooden ark or a niche covered with a veil. Since anyone who could read, could also expound on portions of the text, individuals and groups such as the Jesus movement or the Pharisees could use the public Sabbath gatherings for proclaiming their vision of how Jewish traditions should be understood and lived (Jn 18:20).⁴⁷ The synagogue thus copied the archival function of the Jerusalem Temple and served as storehouse for the Torah scrolls.

The synagogue, however, did not only function as a museum and archive, but also as a school (Fine and Brolley 2009:421; White 2009:652). Josephus states that the Torah was the centre of instruction in the synagogue because “[Moses] did not suffer the guilt of ignorance to go on without punishment, but demonstrated the law to be the best and the most necessary instruction of all others, permitting the people to leave off their other employments, and to assemble together for the hearing of the law, and learning it exactly, and this not once or twice, or often, but every week; which thing all the other legislators seem to have neglected” (Ap 2.175). The synagogue function as a school supports the notion that religion and education in ancient times

cylinder was found). Ezra asked that the royal archives in Babylon be searched, and as a consequence a royal memorandum was discovered (Ezra 5:17). The Israelites, on the other hand, kept their archives in the Temple, including the sacred Scripture with the Law of Moses (2 Kgs 22:8). Later the chamber of the scribe Elishama served as an archival room (Jer 36:20). In Egypt, storehouses were built in synagogues and these yielded manuscripts of great importance for Biblical textual criticism (Stigers 2009:336).

⁴⁷ Neusner (1983a:75-82; 1983b:81-5), however, does not mention that the Pharisees built any structures for their group to worship in during the 1st century.

cannot be separated in that the ancient world did not subscribe to the modern concept of secular education (Runesson 2013:904). The community was responsible for educating children and the youth, and this, as a task that was required by the Torah, took place in the synagogue (White 2009:654; Runesson 2013:904). Wherever ten males were found, the synagogues brought the gift of studying the Torah of God to the people (McCain 2011:63; Yamauchi 2004:1049). The primary functions of the synagogue, besides being a social centre for the Jewish people, was to serve as a place of worship and a school for study.

Worship and study was combined because worship in the synagogue took on the form of instruction (Morton 2009:236). Elementary and secondary schools furthermore operated in or near the synagogue building and the teachers came from the synagogue. These schools normally operated apart from the synagogue in the Temple precincts in Jerusalem or in the teachers' houses in other locales. Through the influence of these institutions, the Jews became known as students of the law; these institutions more than anything else led to the Jews being named "the people of the book" (Morton 2009:237).

As a place with the aim of teaching, and with a focus on reading and expounding on the Torah and the Prophets (Acts 13:15), synagogue services became a rather intellectual affair, so that Philo called the synagogue a school, a place of learning, and the Sabbath service a kind of philosophical pursuit of knowledge and wisdom (Vit Mos 2.215-16; Spec Leg 2.62-3). The regular reading of the Torah was intended to fix the text in the listeners' memories (Riesner 2009:193).

The importance of teaching the Torah is evident from the actions of the Zealot defenders of Herodion in 66-70 CE who, even under siege, constructed a synagogue. At Masada they, under similar circumstances, altered a building to be a school. A hall for services with an adjoining school room was common in the 1st century (Riesner 2009:193). The Torah was the main school text, with other subjects treated according to the Torah. While there must have been schools before 70 CE, especially Greek-speaking synagogue schools, many Jews were not happy with the way in which their culture was being subsumed by the dominant Greco-Roman culture, and therefore rejected the non-Jewish schools as unsuitable for their children (Riesner 2009:193). The reason for this was that Greek schools gave priority to the physical development of pupils, while this had no place in the synagogue (Kee 1990b:5).

From the discussion above it can be stated that being a museum, archive and school was part of the function of the synagogue and agreed with Binder (1999:435) that both the synagogue and the Temple functioned as places where decrees, sacred texts, laws and public notifications were displayed and kept. They also served as places for the dissemination of knowledge, particularly knowledge pertaining to the Torah (Riesner 2009:193).

2.7.6 Place of refuge

The notion of asylum in the ancient Near East was associated with sanctuaries (Griffith 1987:10-11). The Torah reflects this perspective through legislation that allows a killer to flee to a place of refuge if the murder was not premeditated (Hawk 2006:678). For example, Exodus 21:12-14 states that “Anyone who strikes a person with a fatal blow is to be put to death. However, if it is not done intentionally, but God lets it happen, they are to flee to a place I will designate. But if anyone schemes and kills someone deliberately, that person is to be taken from my altar and put to death” (NIV). This legislation was in place as late as the United Monarchy as is attested to by the stories of Adonijah and Joab, who took refuge by grasping the horns of the altar, although Joab was later taken from the altar and executed for the murders of Abner and Amasa (1 Kgs 1:50-53; 2:28-34). Binder (1999:439) is correct that it was not only monies that fell under the protection of the deity in temples, but also humans. It is possible that the synagogue also served as a refuge centre for humans who needed protection as a result of any wrongdoing that they had committed unintentionally.

2.7.7 Charity

Donating charity and alms appears to be a common practice in Judaism. Both Jewish and non-Jewish texts testify that this social welfare system was highly developed and respected in the ancient Jewish community (Levine 2005:396; White 2009:656). Josephus (Ap 11.210-215) states that sharing was enshrined in Jewish laws and that it was mandatory to share food and water with all, even enemies, who asked. It was, however, at the individual’s discretion to help and show compassion to those in need (Bell Jud 11. 133-138). Both the Old and New

Testament⁴⁸ allude to the requirement to aid the needy⁴⁹ (Hiebert 2009a:126, 129; Kim 2006:105-6). The Torah not only requires people to care for the needy, but also requires that the gleaning of fields, olive trees, and vineyards should be left for the poor, especially the widow, the foreigner and fatherless (Lev 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut 27:19-22) (Hiebert 2009a:126). The pronouncements of the prophets, who worked among the Israelites, also advocated the rights of the poor.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Though charity, or almsgiving, is not explicitly alluded to in the Old Testament, giving aid to the poor is strongly emphasised throughout; Israelites were charged with the need to be generous to their brothers and sisters and those in need, especially the poor (Deut 15:11) (Hiebert 2009a:126). It is, however, difficult to differentiate between general benevolence and almsgiving.

⁴⁹ The word used in the Septuagint, ἐλεημοσύνη, does not refer to almsgiving, but to the righteousness or kindness of God. And as a value system in the Old Testament, interest on loans was forbidden for the sake of the poor, so that the poor could borrow when the need arose (Ps 103:6; Isa 1:27; 28:17; Lev 25:39-55) (Kim 2006:106). The Old Testament view on usury can be seen in three passages in the first five books of the Bible. These include Exodus 22:25, Leviticus 25:35-37 and Deuteronomy 32:19-20. According to Sutherland (1982:9), Exodus 22:25 and Leviticus 25:35-37 warn against giving loans to those who are poor with an interest charge. This law was not limited to the poor Jews. In Deuteronomy 32:19-20 there is a warning not only against taking interest from a poor brother, but also from a brother who is not poor. However, the lender was allowed to charge a foreigner interest. Sutherland (1982:9) also discusses other Old Testament passages that are not explicit on the usury teaching, but allude to its importance. For example, Psalms 15:5 speaks of a righteous man as one who, among other things, “lends his money without usury”, as does Ezekiel 18:8. Ezekiel 22:12 and Nehemiah 5:9-11 speak against the practice of charging interest when lending money, especially to the poor, and Ezekiel 18:13 in particular considers it a sin worthy of the death penalty. The prohibition does not appear to have been generally observed in Biblical times. As already mentioned, the warning is to oppressive creditors (e.g. 1 Sam 22:2; 2 Kgs 6:1; Isa 50:1). The prophets were also known to speak against those guilty of economic injustice (Ezek 22:12; Amos 2:6-8).

⁵⁰ It should be noted that Jesus did not condemn the needy but rather hypocritical giving. He did not condemn openly helping the poor but rebuked the ostentatious giving for gaining praise from others (Matt 5:42; Lk 6:38). Jesus also did not praise the costliness of the gift, but the love and the self-denial that motivated it (Mk 12:42-44). Jesus’ concern for the poor is best demonstrated in Luke 4:16-21, which is a major text in this research work. In this passage, which will be treated in Chapter Five, Jesus declares good news for the poor. Caring for the poor and the needy was not peculiar only to Jesus, but also to his disciples. The poor also received due attention in the early church, and their needs were met voluntarily (Acts 4:32-35). The officials elected in Acts 6:1-6 were, for example, elected for almsgiving and because of the value attached to it, which is described as one of the characteristics which a disciple of Christ should display (Matt 6:2-4) (Hiebert 2009a:129; Kim 2006:106).

In regard to charity, certain administrative changes seem to have taken place in the synagogue over time as new positions seem to have appeared in the synagogue, one of which is the collector or “almoner”, whose responsibility was to collect and distribute funds for the poor (White 2009:656). The collector of the synagogue, who was responsible for ministering to the poor, was probably the prototype for the deacon in the early church recorded in 1 Timothy 3:8 (White 2009:656). It appears then, that there was organised charity for the needy, an official charged with the responsibility thereof, and a system of taxation to provide funds for it.

The emperor Julian is understood to have noticed how the Jewish communities cared for their own and complained about how pagan society lacked any concern for their own needy. His complaint, translated by Levine (2005:396) reads: “For it is disgraceful that when no Jews ever have to beg, and the impious Galileans (that is Christians) support not only their own poor but ours as well, all people see that our people lack aid from us.” It appears from his concern that charity was a way of life in the Jewish community. It also seems that this system of social welfare was not only limited to the Jewish needy, but that they also cared for outsiders, as observed in the quotation above.

As a Jewish community centre that was focal in the social, political and religious life of the Jewish people, it appears that charity was pledged and retained in the synagogue and carried out on the Sabbath (Levine 2005:390; White 2009:656). The donations were primarily understood to have been made for the poor (food and clothing), although there were also communal obligations, such as teachers’ salaries (Levine 2005:396). In later rabbinic times when the synagogue took the place of sacerdotal rituals, this and other functions of the synagogue already mentioned, were preserved. It is this practice which later became the basis for the many Jewish charitable organisations that brought aid to both Jews and non-Jews throughout the world as observed earlier (White 2009:656).

According to Levine (2005:396-397), these communal funds for charity were often kept on the synagogue premises. In several excavations of ancient synagogue sites large reserves of coins were discovered, which were probably designated in part for such a purpose. The sacred funds kept by the Jews of Asia Minor in their synagogue stores or banquet rooms may have been

intended for charitable purposes, though some may have been intended for the Jerusalem Temple in the pre-70 period.⁵¹

2.7.8 Council halls, courts and society houses

In Roman and Greek temples there were assembly sections for councils, law courts⁵² and popular assemblies (Runesson 2013:904). This was also the case with the Temple in Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin usually met in one of the στοά within the courts, or in the βουλευτήριον adjoining the complex (Bell Jud 4.336, 5.144, 6.354; Acts 6:14-16). Likewise, matters of public concern were also addressed in the Temple by the monarch or the high priest (Bell Jud 1.122; 2.1-5, 294-295, 320-324, 412; Antiq 9.153, 11.168, 12.164, 13.181, 16.132, 17.200-201) (Binder 1999:445-6). This use of temples is in line with the fact that religion was interwoven with all aspects of life in the ancient world.

The synagogues in both Palestine and the Diaspora also functioned as council halls, courtrooms, and places for public meetings. As a meeting place, the synagogue often served as a locus for debating community issues (Binder 1999:446; Levine 2005:391), while the holding of legal proceedings in the synagogue was also common in the 1st century and is confirmed by several passages in the New Testament⁵³ (Levine 2005:391). In Mark 13:9, for example, Jesus warns his disciples that they will be handed over to the synagogue's council to be beaten, which suggests that the synagogues could decide on and administrate the appropriate punishment of those who transgressed the Torah. It appears that the elders in the synagogue were empowered to exercise discipline and punish members. Such discipline was enforced by scourging and even excommunication (Feinberg 1996:1143).

⁵¹ Josephus himself testifies that Agrippa wrote to the Ephesian magistrate directing him to leave the funds for the Jerusalem Temple to be used by the Jews according to their ancient custom in sacred custody (Antiq 16.167-168). Philo also relates how funds were sent from the synagogues to Jerusalem (Legat 156).

⁵² Josephus (Antiq 14.235) also relates how Lucius Antonius at Sardis requested the freedom for the Jews to operate as a civic court.

⁵³ Matthew 10:7; Acts 22:9.

2.7.9 Place of manumission

Slavery was a fundamental social institution in the Greco-Roman world⁵⁴ (Cho 2014:101; Harrill 2009:304). Slaves had no legal rights throughout Roman antiquity. Slaves were regarded as commodities to be used and disposed of in whatever way the owner wished (Cho 2014:103; Judge 1996:1110). Slaves were found on every level of society and the economy, at least in Italy, Sicily, and a few urbanised provinces (Rupprecht 2009:538, Harrill 2009:304).

Slaves were very important in the structure of urban life and were either inherited or purchased. They were expected to do whatever their masters asked them to do (even sexual favours), although they were provided for with food and shelter (Cho 2014:103). It has been suggested that one in every five persons in ancient times was a slave. In Greek society many families owned at least one slave, while the imperial family possessed some 20 000, and each was given a designated responsibility such as water carrier, chef or doctor. While masters might have had sincere feelings towards their slaves, slaves were viewed as household assets and charity shown towards them was usually motivated by their masters' own financial benefits (Cho 2014:102). They were sold despite their family status, which indicates the level of contempt shown for them. Even though they were bound to their masters for life, manumission⁵⁵ was certainly

⁵⁴ In the New Testament there is no record of Jesus or his disciples condemning slavery as intrinsically evil or sinful. There are several references to slaves and slavery in the gospels and the Acts of Apostles, for example, the centurion's slave (Lk 7:1-10; Matt 8:5-13) and the temple slave of the Jewish high priest (Mk 14:47; Matt 26:51; Lk 22:50-51; Jn 18:10, 26). Jesus told several parables of which the plots revolve around slave characters, for example the parable of the unforgiving slave and the parable of the dishonest manager (Matt 18:23-35; Lk 16:1-13). Paul in his epistles also uses the metaphor of slavery in key passages. He, for example, refers to himself as a "slave of Christ" as an apostolic designation (Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1, Gal 1:10; 1 Cor 9:16-18) (Harrill 2009:306).

⁵⁵ In the ancient Near East, having slaves was common, however none of these societies should be considered genuine slave-societies. The importance of the designation does not lie with the slaves' status, which was hardly unknown, but with their position in ancient economic and societies. The economy of Mesopotamia and the ancient Near East concentrated mostly on slaves in the huge agricultural and commercial complexes of the major temples. Individuals bought and sold slaves, but most of the slaves were owned by the temples or the king (Albert 2009:299, 301). Slavery was also common in the Old Testament (Ex 20:22-23; Deut 12-26; Lev 17-26) and manumission was practiced. In the 50th year of the Jubilee, slaves were released along with their children, to allow them to go back to their own families. On their manumission their ancestral property was returned to them. However, foreign-born slaves enjoyed no such Jubilee manumission or protection from harsh treatment (Harrill 2009:302).

possible and, in fact, arguably desired by most slaves (Binder 1999:439; Cho 2014:102-3). While there were a variety of possible reasons for a slave-owner to manumit a slave either as a sign of gratitude or the desire to marry a slave, in most instances the manumission of a slave was inspired by the master's desire to be seen as a patron or to benefit from the manumission price. The conditions attached to manumission were determined by the slave's master. Freedom was, furthermore, often not granted completely as masters could retain services from their previous slaves even when they are not accountable for their maintenance. Freedmen often found themselves tied down by continuing obligations (Cho 2014:302).

The freeing of slaves occurred differently in various locations. In Rome slaves were freed upon the owner's death. This was done with the aim of displaying the munificence of the deceased. In other places within the empire, slaves could have their freedom purchased by a benefactor, or purchase it themselves using the allowances many of them received (Binder 1999:439). Whatever method was followed, it was common that slaves were formally released in the temple precincts with the priest serving as a witness. The activities of the synagogue among others already discussed, also included the manumission of slaves, and the condition for their release was that the freed slaves would be faithful in attending the synagogue and that they would honour God (Runesson 2013:904).

2.7.10 The synagogue and ritual bathing

Another function of the synagogue which needs to be considered, is the synagogue as "places of ritual bathing". This, according to Binder (1999:393), is true despite the failure of some scholars to accept the connection between purification rituals and synagogues. Josephus, however, testifies to the observance of purity laws by the Jews through their separation from those who they considered to be impure. Among those excluded were Jews declared lepers (Antiq 3.261-264), people who had touched a corpse (Antiq 4.79-81), women who were menstruants (Antiq 3.261; Ap. 104), and women who had recently given birth (Antiq 4.79-81). Men who had had nocturnal emission or had intercourse were also expected to purify themselves before entering the Temple (Antiq 3.263). These stipulations imply that ritual baths were common and an important part of the life of all Jews. But how these stipulations relate to the synagogue as a Jewish institution and the need for rituals baths is unclear. There is, however,

reason to assume that there was a connection between the synagogue and ritual baths. Runesson (2016:23), for example, notes that Greco-Roman temples provided basins at their entrance for the ritual washing of those entering their holy places. The presence of similar basins outside the entrances of the synagogues at Ostia and Delos suggest that the Jews in these locations imitated the custom either in addition to or in line with the traditional Jewish practice of immersion (Binder 1999:391, 397). Runesson (2016:230) also notes that synagogues made use of more water than even their neighbouring bathhouses.

It should be noted that, according to Binder (1999:392-3), the Jewish practice of taking a ritual bath, was not uniform. The Essenes, for example, were extremists in this regard, with many of them attempting to live in a state of purity equivalent to the priests or the Levites who were on duty in the Temple. Though it is uncertain, the Pharisees are also understood to have adhered to more rigorous purity requirements than other Jews. This does not mean that ordinary people did not obey the purity laws, since the directives to be holy, as indicated in Leviticus 11:44, were directed to all the people of the Israel (cf. the purity laws in Lev 12, 13, 14 and 15).

In view of the above it appears that a concern for purity was an important part of the life of every Jew in Palestine or in the Diaspora. A concern for purity characterised Judaism and defined its beliefs and practices (Lev 11:44). It was mandatory for all Jews to undergo certain purification rites before entry into the Temple's inner courts. As noted above, those excluded from entry and required to purify themselves, were Jews declared lepers, menstruants, and men who had had a nocturnal emission or intercourse.

It is possible that, since the taking of ritual baths was part of the laws the Jews had to observe, ritual bathing was also practiced before entering synagogues. In support of this possibility it appears that wherever synagogues are found in Palestine, either immersion pools or natural bodies of water are located nearby. The Theodotus inscription also mentions the construction of water installations near synagogues. This practice was also common in the Diaspora in that Diaspora Jews seem to have made greater use of natural bodies of water for purification rituals than those in Palestine. A practical reason for this may be that rivers are more often found in or near the Diaspora cities than those of semi-arid Palestine (Binder 1999:395). However, it should be noted that there is no clear evidence that this Temple practice was applied to the synagogue either in Palestine or in the Diaspora.

To sum up, and from the above submission, it appears that some degree of purity was required in the Second Temple period synagogues of Palestine and the Diaspora. These requirements were common and appear to have been similar to the entry requirements for both gentile sacred areas and the boundaries of the Jerusalem Temple.

2.7.11 The synagogue as communal institution

Defining the synagogue primarily as a communal institution is justified for several reasons (Levine 2005:383). First, the communal activities noted above are documented as having taken place therein (Levine 1996:531). Thus, even when a location is not specifically mentioned for similar activities, it is more than likely that the venue of these activities was also a synagogue, since no other public building or institution is ever mentioned as playing a similar role. Besides, the very name συναγωγή indicates that the building was primarily a place of meeting that could and did serve these purposes (Levine 1996:431; Spero 2004:61). It is also understood that by the 1st century the synagogue was fully established and that it had become the locus of the Jewish community and was recognised as such by both Jews and non-Jews. When pagans, for example, wished to attack the Jews or defile Jewish property, they vented their wrath on the synagogue.⁵⁶ This was the case in Dor, Alexandria, and Caesarea during the 1st century (Levine 1996:431; 2005:136). Archaeological remains also indicate that we are essentially dealing with a communal institution, featuring the centre of its hall as focal point with benches along all or most of the walls, similar to the plans of contemporary Hellenistic and Roman communal buildings.

The submission above should not be seen to deny the significance of the role the Second Temple synagogue played in the religious life of the community (Levine 2005:148-9; Runesson 2013:904). The Diaspora institutions appear to have also featured prayers and hymns, a Torah-

⁵⁶ The synagogue as a designated structure probably began to emerge as a central feature of the Jewish communal life after the destruction of the Temple. This can be inferred based on the second war with Rome in 132-25 CE, which brought even more destruction and dislocation than the first war. However, it was not until the second half of the 2nd century CE that the Jews in Palestine experienced some relief from war in terms of both its social and economic implications. It was then that the synagogue as building emerged and first took root in Galilee, which had a large Jewish population (Meyers 1992:260).

reading ceremony and accompanying activities. Readings from the Prophets (*haftarah*), recitation of Targum, and sermons are also noted to have taken place. Nevertheless, such an emphasis seems to have more to do with each source's own agenda than with historical reality. Both Philo⁵⁷ and Josephus⁵⁸, as well as the New Testament,⁵⁹ rabbinic literature, and archaeology,⁶⁰ were interested in depicting the synagogue as a uniquely Jewish institution and, in most cases, this meant focussing on its religious dimension (Rosenfeld and Meniray 1999:259; Spero 2004:61; Levine 1996:431-2).

Furthermore, even within the religious domain, sources are inclined to highlight the activity which was most exclusive to the Jewish setting, that is, the regular communal reading of Scriptures. This may be the reason why the Diaspora synagogue, no less than the Palestinian synagogue, is often mentioned with reference to Torah reading and study (Levine 1996:432). It is generally understood that the unique feature of synagogue worship was not the recitation of prayers, hymns, or psalms – activities that seem to be common in pagan religious settings – but rather the public recitation and illustration of the Holy Scriptures. Consequently, no matter what the context in which these sources refer to the synagogue, their authors tend to focus on its unique features, which was a new departure in the religious life of the classical world (Levine 1996:432).

⁵⁷ Philo acknowledges Augustus' knowledge of a house for prayer (προσευχή) where the Jews came together, especially on the Sabbath day, to receive training in their ancestral philosophy in accordance with Moses, who urged them to gather in the same place on the seventh day, sitting together in a respectful and orderly manner, hearing the Torah read so that no one could claim to be ignorant of it. Philo also describes the Essenes' practice on the Sabbath of studying the Torah. According to him, it was regarded as a sacred day, and they normally abandoned all their day-to-day work and gathered at the sacred place called a synagogue, sitting according to their age groups to listen in the proper manner while one person read and another with experience come forward to explain the reading (Legat 156; On Dreams 2, 127).

⁵⁸ Josephus also explains how Moses declared upholding the Torah an important form of teaching, encouraging people to abandon their work and gather every week to listen to the reading of the Law so as to have complete and correct knowledge (Antiq 16, 43).

⁵⁹ In Luke 4:16-22, the focus text of this research, Jesus enters the synagogue on the Sabbath, as was the custom, stood up to read and was given the book of the prophet Isaiah. Acts 13:14-15 also explains how Paul visited the synagogue.

⁶⁰ "Theodotos, son of Yettenos, priest and *archisynagogos*, son of *archisynagogos* and grandson of *archisynagogos*, built the synagogue for reading the law and studying the commandments" (Frey CIJ II.1404).

2.8 Other influences on the synagogue

Having determined that the 1st-century synagogue served a variety of communal functions, the research will now, as suggested by the work of Levine (1996:432), look for other institutions that served a similar purpose in earlier centuries. The place for most, if not all, of the communal activities of the synagogue in previous eras, was the city gate (2.8.1), which was the main communal setting of every community in the First Temple and Persian periods. Another was the Temple (2.8.2).

2.8.1 The city gate and the synagogue

The city gate as an important place for communal activities in the ancient world, has been confirmed by biblical and nonbiblical literature.⁶¹ It served several purposes (Willis 2006:677). It was the most vulnerable part of the city's defences (Isa 28:6) and thus served as a defensive structure of the city in that it controlled access into the city.

The earliest gates were a simple opening in a wall and are found in the Chalcolithic period (5th-4th millennium BCE). A Chalcolithic temple at En Gedi had a gatehouse, basically a two-chamber gate and a second postern gate that led to a spring. By the early Bronze Age, simple gates often had projecting towers with thick walls to protect entrances. According to Drinkard (2009:524), city gates in the Middle Ages were clearly designed primarily for a defensive function. However, in the Iron Age city gate complexes were designed for multiple purposes. Though defence was primary, the presence of open malls, administrative buildings, warehouses,

⁶¹ Although city gates were part of almost every city's defence in the ancient world, they did not have the same sociological function in all cities over the ages. Most of the communal functions described in this section describe the role of the city gates in Assyria and Babylon. In the Greco-Roman world many of these functions were fulfilled by *bema*, raised platforms, from which judges and governors would, for example, announce their legal decisions (Acts 18:12).

and even cultic⁶² installations in or adjacent to the gate complex, indicates a much larger social context (Drinkard 2009:522).

A typical gate consisted of two to four pairs of piers and intervening pairs of chambers. Some cities enhanced their defences with a long entry way leading up to the gate at a right angle. References to cities with gates reflects their importance (Gen 24:60) as well as the idea that the gate represented the entire city (Willis 2006:677). City inhabitants passed back and forth between their homes and fields or other communities through the gate of the city. Visitors also entered the city through the city gate (Ps 24:7-10).

The areas adjacent to the gates served as spaces for all sorts of local business. Contracts and legal disagreements were finalised and resolved in the city gate.⁶³ It was a place where elders sat and acted as judges and witnesses, and people went to the city gate for justice and to maintain the moral and ethical health of the city (Ruth 4:1; Job 29:7; Prov 31:23, 31; Lam 5:14; 2 Sam 15:1-4; 18:33-19:8; Isa 29:20-21; Amos 5:10-15) (Drinkard 2009:523). The city gate in the ancient Israelite world also served as a market square (Levine 1996:433). This is confirmed by the prophet Elisha in his words to the king in 2 Kings 7:1: “Elisha replied, hear the word of the Lord. This is what the Lord says: About this time tomorrow, a *seah* of the finest flour will sell for a shekel and two *seahs* of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria” (NIV). It was also a setting where a ruler would hold court and where prophets would speak on behalf of God. “Dressing in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them” (1 Kgs 22:10). And while sitting in the Benjamin Gate, Ebed-Melek had Jeremiah put in the cistern (Jer 38:7) (NIV).

⁶² The city gate was also a location for cultic activity. At Mudayna on the Wadi Thamad, a sanctuary was discovered just inside the gate complex. And at Tel Dan four sets of *messebot* were found in the gate area. The strongest proof of cultic activity within the gate complex comes from Bethsaida. This site had several cultic installations in front of the inner gate of the city. The most impressive one is the מִזְבֵּחַ or high place just to the right of the inner gate. Two steps lead to the top of the מִזְבֵּחַ. The top is a smooth basin in which two incense burners were found. A stele originally sat at the rear of the מִזְבֵּחַ – it was discovered broken in several pieces nearby. The stele had a bull-headed figure, probably representing a moon deity. To the left of the inner gate is a plain niche, also apparently for cultic purposes. Four additional stelae, benches, and a shelf within the gate complex indicate more cultic activity (Drinkard 2009:523).

⁶³ Deuteronomy 17:5; 21:19; 22:15, 24; 25:7; Ruth 4:11.

Levine (1996:433), supported by Ryan (2016:94), believes that the synagogue took over some of the activities of the city gate. They argue that the city gate was a popular meeting place for public gatherings where communal activities were conducted. Ryan (2016:94) views Levine's proposal as supported by both literary and archaeological evidence. He also underlines how the function of the synagogue in the Second Temple period was a replication of the function of the city gate as evidenced in the Hebrew Bible.

The city gate was mostly frequented by the populace as well as the elders and the leaders. Genesis 23:10 and 18⁶⁴ shows that the transaction between Abraham and Ephron the Hittite was carried out at the city gate. This is the same gate that several legal documents from Nuzi refer to concluding with the formula, "the tablet was written after the proclamation at the city gate". Any announcement of a settlement at the gate afforded it maximum publicity as well as the assent of the entire community. It was also in the city gate that prophetic activities were carried out to reach the greatest number of people.

Another function, if not the primary one, is that the city gate functioned as a locale that dispensed justice.⁶⁵ The discovery of benches in the chamber rooms of gates and in the area between inner and outer gates has been interpreted as being the place where the elders sat (Drinkard 2009:523). The importance of the city gate as a place for settling personal affairs in the presence of the community is also reflected in Ruth 4:1-2. This passage explains how Boaz went up to the gate of the city, and sat down while the "guarding redeemer" who is mentioned, also came along. Boaz invited a friend to come up and sit with him, and also ten elders of the city. According to Levine (1996:434), the ten elders mentioned convened there frequently to officiate as judges, mediators, and witnesses to business transactions. They were also the civil judiciary as opposed to the sacred judicial framework of the Jerusalem Temple or the local sanctuaries presided over by priests.

⁶⁴ "Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of his city" (NIV).

⁶⁵ Parents who had a stubborn child who refused to listen to them were mandated to bring such a child to elders at the city gate for punishment. The parents were required to explain to elders how stubborn the child was. When this was done, the child would be stoned to death. The reason for this was to stamp out evil in society and instil fear in the people as they heard the news (Deut 21:18-21; 17:5; 22:24; Ps 69:13). In the days of the prophet Amos the people were also advised to shun evil and love good and be sure justice is carried out at the city gate (Amos 5:15).

The significance of the gate of a city is further reflected by the fact that a conqueror could place his throne there as a sign of conquest. Nebuchadnezzar's officers, for example, did so: in Jeremiah 39:3 Nebuchadnezzar's officers gathered and took their seats in the centre of the city. The king also sat at the city gate to provide people with the opportunity to present their complaints to him. So, for example, following Absalom's death, Joab urged David to bring an end to his mourning and to sit at the gate so that "all the people may come before the king" (2 Sam 19:8-9). On another occasion, Ahab of the kings of Israel, along with Jehoshaphat, one of the kings of Judah, frequented the city gate. They, for example, sat at the gate of Samaria prior to a battle in Gilead, summoning the prophets to support their venture (1 Kgs 22:10). In 2 Chronicles 32:6 Hezekiah congregated the people at the city gate to strengthen their resolve in the face of Sennacherib's imminent attack; a century or so later Zedekiah also sat at a city gate called Benjamin (Jer 38:7).

The city gate also served as a place for performing religious functions in that people often gathered at the city gate to worship gods (Levine 1996:434-5). The destruction of the city gate therefore had a direct impact on a city and its surrounding community and their ability to conduct their affairs. 2 Kings 23:8 describes Josiah's reforms of 621 BCE. In his quest to reform the country religiously, he gathered the priests from all the cities of Judah and defiled all the high places from Geba to Beersheba, places where the priests were burning incense. This passage also explicitly states that Josiah broke down the entrance leading to the Gate of Joshua and the city governor on the left side of the gate of the city.

In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah during the postexilic period, the area of the city gate was also well utilised. According to Nehemiah 8:1, the entire people assembled and requested that Ezra the scribe bring the scroll of the Law of Moses with which the Lord instructed the Israelite.⁶⁶ The threshing floor was often located just outside the gate and was also a place of assembly. As recorded in 1 Kings 22:10, the monarchs of Israel and Judah met at the threshing floor of Samaria and the prophets prophesied to them. At Tel Dan in the area between the inner and outer gate, there was a canopied platform that probably held a throne (Drinkard 2009:523). Because it functioned as a public assembly point, Jeremiah delivered his oracles to the people

⁶⁶ Information on the city gate has been gathered from excavations at Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer, and Tel Sheba. The excavated gates differ physically. For example, in Jericho there seems to have been only one gate, but in other cities there may have been several (Thompson 1996:208).

there (Jer 17:19). Likewise, the people gathered in the plaza at one of the city gates to listen to Ezra as he read the law to them (Ezra 8:1).

The information gathered above is mainly from the Old Testament and, since the research is focussed on a document from the New Testament, it is important to determine whether the New Testament also refers to the city gate. According to Blickenstaff (2009:524), the New Testament does mention the city gate (Lk 7:12; Acts 12:10; Heb 13:12). The city gates are depicted as a place of execution when Stephen is dragged outside the city to be stoned (Acts 7:58). And Paul and Silas spoke with Lydia at a place of assembly outside the gates, where people came to pray (Acts 16:13).

The city gate served as a site of many communal functions that included social, political and religious ones. These functions of the city gate as discussed above are believed to have been carried over to or to have served as a model for the synagogue as it is apparent that some functions of the city gate are replicated in the synagogue when compared with the role of the synagogue as discussed in 2.7. Synagogues did not originate in a vacuum and, although certain functions were unique to them, they were also influenced by other institutions like the city gate (Levine 1996:433; Ryan 2016:94).

2.8.2 The Temple and the synagogue

Having treated the city gate to see how it relates to the synagogue, the focus now turns to another institution that is believed to have given birth to the synagogue, the Temple.

Binder (1999:390), when referring to the function of the synagogue in connection to the ancient temples and the Jerusalem Temple states that, “the synagogues, like the ancient Temples, served as centres for a variety of religious and civic activities”. These functions were strikingly similar to those associated with the courts of the Jerusalem Temple. However, Levine (2001:26-27) challenges this, saying that Binder fails to substantiate why he states that the ancient synagogue was similar to the Temple. This section will therefore explore how the ancient synagogue and the Temple resembled or differed from each other.

The outward similarities between the Temple and the synagogue have been noted. There are also emblematic references to the Temple to be found in the synagogue. Both are places where

God could be worshipped. Some of the prayers once observed in the Temple, are today replicated in the synagogue (Spero 2004:61). This practice was also performed in the Jerusalem Temple, where individual worshipers are portrayed as offering prayers and prostrations in addition to or in place of sacrifice (Binder 1999:414). This practice may go back to the biblical account of Exodus 25:8ff,⁶⁷ which represents Moses as saying to the Israelites that the tabernacle⁶⁸ must be built so that they can take it with them if they move elsewhere and are not able to ascend to Sinai to speak to God, as God himself would be present in the tabernacle. As a place of prayer, the synagogues appear to have also facilitated this ascent, allowing worshippers throughout the world to enter their sacred spaces and offer supplications through prayers to the central house of prayer (Binder 1999:414-5).

The visual connection between at least one synagogue and the Temple is emphasised by Schenk (2010:195). According to him, the adornment in the Dura-Europos synagogue (Syria, 244-245 CE) is a lasting sample of a Jewish symbolic account of the ancient world. In its final stage, the synagogue had three bands of story panels which encircled all four walls of the synagogue's meeting gallery which led up to the Torah sanctuary at the centre of the wall in the west. A symbolic image of the Temple on the Torah sanctuary was an important part of this adornment in the Dura synagogue (Schenk 2010:195).

The Jerusalem Temple characterised the priestly component and ceremonial aspect in Judaism and so the extravagant traditional construction of the later synagogue was probably not important until the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE. Whether local synagogue structures followed the model of the Temple in Jerusalem or served as centres for directing the Temple rituals, is debated among scholars. However, ritual objects from the Temple, such as the lamp stand, eternal light and tablets of the Ten Commandments, were usually present in the synagogue (Spero 2004:61). It is the presence of these objects and the manner in which

⁶⁷ "Then have them make a Sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you" (Ex 25:8-9).

⁶⁸ Tabernacle is a transliteration of a Latin word meaning "tent". In the Bible it is used specifically for the sanctuary built under the direction of Moses in the wilderness. The following are the principal passages dealing with the tabernacle: Exodus 25-29; 30-31; 35-40; Numbers 3:25-38; 4:4-49 and 7:1-88. The purpose of the structure is found in Exodus 25:8 and 21-22. It was made according to the design shown to Moses on the mount (Ex 25:9; 26:30) (Feinberg 2009:664).

synagogues were constructed that has resulted in the understanding of the synagogue as a sort of “poor substitute” for the Temple, with communal prayers taking the place of the sacrifices, the oblations and the incense offerings (Spero 2004:61).⁶⁹

Hachlili (1997:45) has, however, stated that the adornment of synagogues differs from synagogue to synagogue. The northern synagogue group (Galilean and Golan) had a facade with intricate decorations which must have indicated the importance of the synagogue building and differentiated it from surrounding buildings. While some synagogues were carefully ornamented on the outside, others placed more importance on the inside, decorating the floors with mosaics. A noticeable difference between the Second Temple synagogue and the later synagogue is the manner in which seats were positioned.

The discussion above provided information on the roles of both the synagogue and the Temple. Exploring the Temple as an institution in relation to the synagogue revealed some similarities between the synagogue and the Temple. It also helped to reveal the ways in which the Temple shaped the synagogue. In view of this, I agree with Spero (2004:60) that the connection of the synagogue as an institution with the Temple in Jerusalem, cannot be denied. The Temple can be considered the mother of the synagogue. But, despite the striking similarities between the two, there are also dissimilarities.

With the demolition of the Temple, people began to gather in local buildings, and this development justifies saying the synagogue took the place of the Temple, which was a national centre and a centre for worship.⁷⁰ The ancient synagogue served as a gathering centre with a special focus on the reading of the law and the recitation of prayers as discussed in 2.7.1-2 (Hachlili 1997:43). The reading of the law took centre stage, and prayers were recited while facing Jerusalem and was mandatory for all people. Another unique aspect of the later synagogues was the shrine for the Torah that was built into the Jerusalem oriented wall (Hachlili 1997:43). Before the demolition of the Temple, the synagogue remained a peripheral

⁶⁹ In terms of structure, synagogues were constructed with four walls, with the position of the Torah indicating the importance of the position of the Torah and Jerusalem direction. It also indicated the purity of the place and served as an aide-mémoire of how important the Temple was (Hachlili 1997:46).

⁷⁰ It should be noted that, while synagogues came to be known as centres for communal activities after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, there were already about 480 synagogues in Jerusalem before this time (Yamauchi 2004:1049).

establishment, but afterwards it became the centre of the Jewish community. It was not only a place for reading and learning, but also served as a prayer house, a place where spiritual law was recognised and imparted, and the *Halacha* was performed. Optional laws and rules that concern the synagogue were not compulsory for synagogue worshippers. The synagogue structure also served both as the local hall and the social centre (Hachlili 1997:43-4).

In terms of function and architecture, after the destruction of the Temple, the synagogue became a recognised institution and the traditional focus for the spiritual life of the people in a way that, in a manner, replaced the Temple. It appears that the emergence of the synagogue became a necessity when the Temple no longer existed. Hence it is justified to say that the synagogue was a derivative of the Temple, rather than competing with it or an institution that embodied a radically different form of Judaism (Hachlili 1997:43; Leithart 2002:129). It also seems that the mandatory prayer, a new institution in the life of the Jewish people coinciding with the rise of the synagogue, was instituted by the advisor Jabneh. This was a welcome development in terms of social and educational purposes. However, it was only adapted as a law after the demolition of the Temple demanded a re-institution of the synagogue programme. The introduction of prayers as a rule became the most important one in the history of the nation. Its introduction also addressed the theological challenges of the community and helped to bring the dispersed Jewish survivors together as an exceptional national and religious body. Before 70 CE the synagogue was primarily a centre for reading and learning about the law with a didactic and liturgical intention; after 70 CE it became a centre for prayer and practising the religion (Hachlili 1997:43-4).

Besides these two dissimilarities in terms of the function of the late ancient synagogue and the Second Temple, there are also variances in plan, construction, adornment, and other functions. According to White (2009:650), architecturally the synagogue was similar to contemporary Greco-Roman pagan constructs as well as “the Jewish Temple at Elephantine in Upper Egypt”. In terms of the mode of worship, the synagogue appears to have differed from the Temple in that it had no priestly rituals and supported no revered priesthood; a different order of leadership, the rabbi, developed in the synagogue (White 2009:650).

Some organisational positions later arose in the synagogue, one of which was the person responsible for the collection of the contributions that were made for the poor. Almsgiving was a revered public feature of the Jewish religious community (see 2.7.7). This is also mentioned

in the rabbinic literature and the New Testament⁷¹ (White 2009:656). It seems that, while the Jerusalem Temple was supported by the royal establishment and obtained its revenue through taxes, voluntary and free offerings were the order of the day in the synagogue. The model of the deacon found in the early church must have been retained as a practice which became the basis for many Jewish humanitarian organisations that give alms to both Jews and non-Jews all over the world (White 2009:656).

In view of the above, it is certain that the dedicated synagogues had a prearranged focal point, the Torah sanctuary, built into the Jerusalem wall. It is also clear that there were certain dissimilarities between the synagogue and the Temple, especially in terms of function. It has often been stated that after the synagogue replaced the Temple, it provided the Jews with a new focus of worship which made the Torah, rather than the sacrifice, the centre of devotion. This implies that, instruction on day-to-day life took centre stage in the synagogue as opposed to the Temple focus on sacrifices. Unlike the Temple, where priests were the leaders or played a key role, in the synagogue anyone could lead. Geographically the synagogue was also not limited to a particular place. However, the synagogue was not a rival institution of the Temple. Instead it was established to complement the Temple, which was located in Jerusalem. Another important point to be taken into consideration, is the fact that the synagogue as an institution acted as a reminder of the Temple (Hachlili 1997:45). As discussed in this chapter, teaching, prayer, and even fellowship meals took place in the ancient synagogue, but one thing that was central in the Temple but never happened in the synagogue, was the offering of sacrifices; blood was never poured out in the synagogue.

2.9 The synagogue functionaries

Having looked at the synagogue and the Temple in terms of their similarities and dissimilarities, the synagogue functionaries and the place of women will now be considered. With the synagogue functionaries, I refer to those who oversaw and directed the affairs of the synagogue, or the leaders. Here an attempt will be made to determine who was involved in directing the affairs of the synagogue and whether women also participated (2.10). Determining the

⁷¹ Matthew 6:2-4.

functionaries of the synagogue and the place of women therein is important since it provides a picture of the synagogue that can be compared to that provided by Luke-Acts.

Synagogues had a formal institutionalised structure with several strata of functionaries⁷² (Binder 1999:371; Runesson 1992:905). According Runesson (1992:905), the synagogues followed the pattern of Greco-Roman associations in that they had community rules or charters. The leadership titles used in the synagogue include ἀρχισυναγώγων (the ruler of the synagogue)⁷³ (Mk 5:22), ἄρχων (ruler)⁷⁴ (Matt 9:18), ὑπηρέτης (attendant) (Lk 4:20), γραμματεῖς (scribe) (Mk 1:21-22), and πρεσβυτέρος (elder)⁷⁵ (the Theodotos inscriptions; Lk 7:3-5). Although priests were synagogue leaders, ἱερέων (priest) was a hereditary title related to the Temple cult and its use therefore did not in itself indicate a position in a synagogue.

What these titles implied is unclear. Runesson (1992:905) and Binder (1999:371) argue that the ἀρχισυναγώγων and the ἄρχων enjoyed the highest status. They also served as patrons and as spiritual and political leaders of the synagogue. Though there was a great deal of overlap in their offices, the former oversaw the religious services of the community, while the latter was responsible for carrying out the judicial and the legislative tasks in the community (Binder 1999:371). As principal officers, the ἀρχισυναγώγων and ἄρχων were surrounded by a college of elders, who served as advisors and the representatives of the people's concerns both inside and outside the community and at the same time functioned as teachers and patrons (Binder 1999:371). The γραμματεῖς, on the other hand, were associated with teaching at public Sabbath gatherings (Mk 1:21-22) and were probably also in charge of teaching at other occasions. In the 1st century, scribes also served in public synagogues as administrators and judges. It should also be noted that reading and teaching in public synagogues were not exclusive to official positions since anyone could perform these tasks (Runesson 1992:905).

⁷² This is opposed to the view that the early synagogue congregations were comprised of informal gatherings or groups that were democratic in nature (Binder 1992:371).

⁷³ This could refer to ἄρχων meaning “leader” or “president” of the synagogue (Trenchard 2003:20).

⁷⁴ ἄρχων refers to a “ruler, lord, prince, authority, leader, official or judge” (Trenchard 2003:20).

⁷⁵ It simply means “elder” or refers to an older person (Duff 2005:310).

Apart from the scribes, there were attendants who were responsible for overseeing, providing security, and assisting in the handling of the Scriptures (Binder 1999:371). The Pharisees may have overseen their own association, but there is no available evidence that they served as leaders in the public synagogue (Runesson 1992:905). Kloppenborg (2006:279) notes that the Theodotos inscription refers to Pharisees serving as synagogue leaders. Runesson, Binder and Olsson (2008:3-4) add that “synagogue” appears to be linked to the Pharisees, a group that is incorrectly presumed to have served as leaders in 1st-century synagogues before the rabbis took over around the late 1st and early 2nd centuries. However, it is understood that synagogue leadership varied, and was comprised of people representing different religio-political outlooks. Not a few leaders were priests, a point that challenges the belief in the contrast between the Temple and the synagogue in the area of influence and leadership in Jewish society.

2.10 The place of women

Binder (1999:379), who focusses on the role of women in his study of the synagogues of the Second Temple period, states that women clearly participated in the Sabbath services and other activities held in the synagogue. Information gathered about the 1st to the 7th century CE, and from Palestine, seems to suggest that women participated in the synagogues during worship services. Jesus, for example, is described as encountering a woman in the synagogue while teaching, and Paul often met women whenever he visited Diaspora synagogues (Levine 2005:500-1). The opinion of both Binder and Levine seems to be supported by Acts 16:12-13 which states that: “From there we travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia and we stayed there several days. On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there” (NIV). The reference to women being allowed in Jewish gatherings is supported by Josephus (Antiq 14.259–261), who refers to a decree of the senate allowing the Jews to assemble with their wives and children, according to their custom.

The presence of women in the synagogues in Thessalonica and nearby Berea, has also been noted by scholars. Levine (2005:501-2), for example, states that the presence of women in synagogues is confirmed by later Christian sources from the Diaspora in that around the 4th century John Chrysostom made a claim that synagogues were places of abomination, the proof

of which lay in the fact that they were open to both men and women mingling in worship. In his diatribe against the Jews, Chrysostom adds that some of the women in his church were Judaizers indicating that they regularly attended the synagogue. Given the fact that women were noticeable in the Jerusalem Temple until the year 70 CE and taking into consideration the evidence noted above that they regularly frequented the synagogue in later periods, there is enough reason to accept that their presence in the synagogue was a general phenomenon throughout late antiquity.

Concerning seating arrangements, the general assumption, as noted by Levine (2005:503), is that men and women were seated separately and that a separate place was reserved for women in all synagogues. This view has, however, been challenged as archaeological evidence from both Palestine and the Diaspora dating from the 1st to 7th centuries CE shows that men and women did sit together. From the farthest reaches of the Roman Empire and throughout Roman Byzantine Palestine, several synagogues had only one room where the faithful gathered, with no evidence of a balcony. Adding weight to this, Fine and Brolley (2009:422) deny any physical separation of men and women in the synagogue, although they do emphasise the existence of a social division, which could be in the form of a seating arrangement. They add that separation first came into play during the early Middle Ages. This separation seems to be a demonstration of the holiness of the synagogue, which could suggest the influence of the Temple in Jerusalem. According to Levine (2005:505), there can be little doubt that throughout late antiquity Jews congregated in the synagogue for religious purposes without making any distinction between men and women in terms of sitting arrangements.

Regarding leadership, Binder (1999:372), who decries how the Jewish leadership in the Second Temple period was unashamedly patriarchal, states that from the chief priest, the priests, the Levites, the ἄρχοντες, the elders, to the scribes, all were men, and that a similar system was also common in the synagogue. However, Levine (2005:509-10) observes that the leadership role of women in the synagogues has been reassessed in the pioneering work of Broton (1982). The available evidence appears to be quite clear; women are identified by the titles *archisynagossa* (Syrna, Crete, Myndos), *archegissa* (Thessaly), *presbytera* (Crete, Thrace, Venosa, three times), *Tripolitarian*, (Rome, Melita), *Mater* (Rome, Venosa, Venetia), *Pateressa* (Venosa), and priestess (Egypt, Rome, Jerusalem, Bet Sha 'arim). As observed by Levine (2005:510), a reference in the rabbinic literature to a woman treasurer (*gizbarit*), can also be added.

In terms of the abovementioned titles, an important question is whether they were honorific titles or official positions occupied by these women? It should be noted that, despite Brooten (1982) successfully arguing for reviewing and re-evaluating the possibility of women as synagogue officials, she fails to provide clear evidence that these titles were not just honorific (Levine 2005:510). Explorations of the role of women in synagogue life from a historical perspective, carried out by Levine (2005:511-518), show that Jewish societies in the Diaspora were quite different from their social environs in which women did occupy leadership positions.⁷⁶ In Jewish societies women did not play any kind of liturgical role in the synagogues and, whatever might have been the reason, the fact remains that in a monotheism setting, an official liturgical role for women was always marginal, if not negligible. In this case, the synagogue probably resembled the Temple in limiting women in terms of leadership positions.

2.11 The synagogue and ἐκκλησία

According to Judge (2009:29) the Greek terms συναγωγή and ἐκκλησία both refer to a meeting or assembly. The two terms are not necessarily cultic terms, nor do they intrinsically have something to do with an association or a particular community. However, they did come to refer to the buildings where communities met. According to White (2009:656), the early church retained and reclaimed the model of the synagogue's organisational structure, arguing that "the most important legacy of the synagogue in the 1st century was the form and organisation of the church" (White 2009:650). If this is indeed the case, one would expect all the functions of the synagogue, as explained above, to be replicated in the church today. After all, Christian gatherings (the ἐκκλησία) and the synagogue are both understood to have been "cultural

⁷⁶ It appears that the Jewish communities resisted contemporary influences by denying women any liturgical function. It was common in Greco-Roman society for women to play both important and secondary roles in cultic settings. They held certain priestly positions and other kinds of roles in the temples of a wide variety of deities (Levine 2005:518). But it has also been noted that women played an important role in early Christianity, in the early church, and in a number of prominent sects. Whether because of the challenge of early Christian ideology to many of the social and religious assumptions of the age, communal living and the downplaying of marriage and family, heightened spirituality or a strong apocalyptic orientation in such Christian settings, women were given room to free themselves from the shackles of society and traditions that may have been a hindrance to their contributions (Levine 2005:518).

minority groups” since they shared a loyalty to one god (“monotheism”) in a context where worship of many gods (“polytheism”) appeared to be an acceptable order and tolerated.

Leithart (2002:29-32), who argues that the early church embodied the form of the Temple rather than the synagogue, also states that the idea that Christian worship developed out of the synagogue service, is not completely without merit. Others confirm that the practice of church worship, with a few exceptions, replicates worship in the synagogue. As far as it is possible to determine, the mode of worship in the synagogue appears to have centred on scriptural reading, teaching and prayer. This ensemble of liturgical actions closely matches Luke's descriptions of the meetings of the early Christians.

It is also evident from Acts that Paul drew many of his early converts from the synagogue. It is therefore possible that they continued to worship in much the same way as they had before their incorporation into the church. This is the view of Landsberger (1957:181), who aligns the “sacred direction” of the synagogue and the early church. For him the connection between the synagogue and the early church was a close one.

According to Luke 4:16, Jesus began his earthly ministerial work in the synagogue as a place where he expounded the Torah. In Acts 13:14 and 14:1 Paul is also portrayed as beginning his ministry in the synagogue. It is plausible that early Christians borrowed from the synagogue in Jerusalem as a model for worship and evangelism (Filson 1944:86).

From the submission above, it could be correct to say that the church (i.e. as a group of people) as institution took over from the synagogue in early Christianity. The church may have certain features in common with the Temple, but its closest connection appears to be with the synagogue. As late as Julian Apostate, the Jews hoped to re-establish the Temple in Jerusalem. Christians, however, interpreted its destruction as a vindication of their belief that the purpose of the Temple was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Jn 2:21), and that he was the High Priest (Heb 5:5-6), the feast (Jn 7:37-38) and the sacrificial victim (Rom 3:24-25; Rev 13:8) (Binder 1990:498; Kee 1990c:20). In this regard Kee (1990c:24) states that:

In spite of basic differences on ethnic, moral, social and exegetical issues, we can see that Pharisaic Judaism and early Christianity move down into the second century with each laying claim to be the true heirs of the covenantal tradition, the true interpreters of the scriptures, the proponents of the proper criteria for

moral behaviour, and the agents of institutional forms and structures which will develop in the later second century into what came to be known respectively as apostolic Christianity and rabbinic Judaism. The former calls itself the ἐκκλησία; the latter emergent organization adopts the name of *synagoge*.

In line with their embracing of an ideal worldview of a transformed world, Christians deemed it fit to hold their meetings in the houses in which they dwelt as is indicated by references in the New Testament to how the church met in the houses of individuals (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15). The adoption of the house as a meeting place may have simply been because it was convenient or because the immediacy of the expected return of Christ precluded them from building more elaborate structures in which to worship (1 Tess 4:14-17). This was also in line with the origin of the Lord's Supper at the Passover (Lk 22:1-20; Cor 11:17-34), the Jewish feast that centred on a celebration in the home.⁷⁷

Despite using private houses for their assemblies, the Christian ἐκκλησία was clearly indebted to the synagogue. According to Meeks (1983:80-1), it is impossible to deny the similarity between the synagogue and the ἐκκλησία. Several functions including the reading and the interpretation of Scripture, communal prayer, and the eating of common meals, were taken over from the synagogue (1 Cor 11:17-34, 14:26). Paul's instruction to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 6:1-7 to settle their legal affairs within their assembly also reflects a similar practice to that in the synagogue (2.8). The collection of offerings from the gentile churches for the mother church in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1-3; Rom 15:25-27; 2 Cor 8:9) also resembles the sending of envoys bearing the temple tax from the Diaspora synagogues to Jerusalem (2.7). It is also interesting that in James 2:2 (see 3.4) the author calls the assembly of Christians a synagogue. Similarities between the church's leadership and that of synagogue officials have also been suggested, for example, ἐπισκόποις (Phil 1:1) is similar to ἀρχισυναγώγων, the Christian πρεσβυτέρους (1 Pet 5:1; Jas 5:14; Acts 20:17) has an equivalent in the Jewish πρεσβυτέρους, while διακόνος (Phil 1:1; Rom 16:1) corresponds with the ὑπηρέτης in the synagogue.

⁷⁷ However, it is debatable whether the Last Supper took place on the Passover or the night before the death of Jesus (Meier 1991:395-400).

Architecturally, as stated by Chiat (1982:423), “Christianity witnessed the building of churches throughout the Empire, churches that, I suggest, borrowed elements from the synagogue and the Temple”. Binder (1990:500) also indicates how various structures that were taken to be churches of the Byzantine period, were later identified as synagogues. It is clear that in terms of function, organisation and form, the synagogue and church are closely related.

2.12 Conclusion

In this chapter the origin and function of the synagogue were surveyed. Studies have shown that the origin of the synagogue is shrouded in mystery and may never be fully known. However, the synagogue was clearly a well-known institution in both Palestine and in the Diaspora in the 1st century and the intertestamental period.

The chapter also compared the synagogue with the city gate, the Temple and the early church (2.8.1). The intention was to see how the three institutions relate to the synagogue. This study has proposed that the Temple and the city gate had a great impact on the emergence of the synagogue, with the synagogue taking over some of the activities of both the Temple and the city gate. The church, on the other hand, seems to have assumed some of the activities of the synagogue. It should also be noted that, while the synagogue eventually took over the place of the Temple, it did not come into existence as a result of any rivalry or controversy.

This chapter indicated that the origin and function of the ancient synagogue were, as one would expect, related in that the synagogue was instituted to fulfil various needs of Jewish communities in different contexts. According to Wilson (2006:400), the need for an institution like the synagogue can specifically be related to the changes that the Babylonian captivity brought to the Jewish religion. As a result of the Babylonian exile, the Jews lost their land, temple, and priestly ministrations, and began to adopt a non-sacrificial religion. They started gathering in houses for the purpose of reading the Torah, instruction and prayers. This shift is assumed to be the root of the synagogue.

The following functions of the synagogue (2.7) were identified: reading and exposition of Scripture, prayer, celebrating festivals, holy days and communal dining, as well as being a treasury, museum, archive and school. The functions also include being a place of refuge,

charity, council meetings, courts, society houses and manumission. This confirms that the synagogue's origin and its functions are related. The reading of the Scripture seems to be the primary reason for the establishment of the synagogue. It, however, appears that there was no fixed community rule stating who does what in the synagogue. There is also no narrative of the synagogue's origin (like the tabernacle or Temple), nor is there a fixed blueprint for it. As noted above (2.8), even the reading and teaching of the Scripture, which were done according to clear rules in the Temple, were not exclusive to an official position in the public synagogue. It appears from the survey undertaken of the origin of the synagogue that anyone could perform these tasks.

Architecturally (see 2.3), the layout and structures of the synagogues were not the same as the houses that are understood to have been used as places of worship. This implies that the structures (buildings) used, functionaries, and activities of the synagogue were all contextual. Acts 6:1-7 supports this point; not all Christian meetings (or Christian synagogues), for example, had a specific ministry organised for the poor Greek speaking Jewish widows.

Regarding the synagogue functionaries discussed in 2.9, it has been noted that the synagogue seems to have followed the pattern of Greco-Roman associations and/or characters especially in the areas of leadership. These include ἀρχισυναγώγων who are understood to have been in charge of the synagogue (Mk 5:22), and the ἄρχων (ruler) (Matt 9:18), ὑπηρέτης (attendant or servant) (Lk 4:20) (Duff 2005:312), γραμματεῖς (scribe) (Mk 1:21-22), πρεσβυτέρος (elder) (cf. the Theodotos inscriptions; Lk 7:3-5) and perhaps δυνατός. Although it has been claimed that priests (ἱερεὺς) were synagogue leaders, according to Duff (2005:307), this was not a hereditary position as compared to the Temple cult and did not in itself indicate that someone occupied a leadership position in a synagogue.

Following Binder (1999) it was accepted that ἀρχισυναγώγων and the ἄρχων seem to have enjoyed a higher position in the synagogue. The two positions are understood to have served as patrons and as spiritual and political leaders of the synagogue. And in terms of who was more senior, the two are understood to have overlapped. While the former is said to have directed the religious services of the community, the latter was responsible for carrying out the judicial and the legislative tasks in the community.

The two principal officers are also assumed to have been surrounded by a college of elders (πρεσβύτεροι), who served as advisers, representatives, teachers and patrons. This implies that

this college of elders sometimes performed the roles of ἄρχων and ἀρχισυναγώγων, since they also played the role of patrons. It also implies that there was no fixed rule guiding who does what, as has been noted. The γραμματεῖς (scribes) are, however, understood to have been responsible for teaching at public gatherings and possibly other occasions (Mk 1:21-22), and to have served in the public synagogues as administrators and judges. However, reading and teaching in public synagogues was not exclusive to an official position, as anyone who could read, could do so (2.7.1). The attendants were also responsible for maintenance, providing security, and assisting with the handling of the Scriptures. Where the Pharisees may have been responsible for the leadership of their associations, there is no evidence regarding their leadership role in all synagogues (cf. 2.9).

Regarding seating arrangements and women in leadership, it is accepted that women sat with men and had some leadership roles, especially in the Diaspora synagogue. These practices were contrary to the practice in the Temple, where women sat separately and did not have the privilege of playing a leadership role (Ehrman 2000:36-7).

From the above discussion, one could surmise that synagogue leadership varied and that there were no standard rules. This is also different from the Temple, where there were fixed rules in terms of roles, for example the priests were in charge of the Temple and nobody except them could perform a sacrifice. The study of the ancient synagogue, however, did not present any standard of activities or any rules regarding who fulfilled which roles. This implies that functions and roles were contextual. The contexts and needs of the people determined the activities. However, it should also be noted that, while the activities observed in the synagogue varied from period to period and context to context, the reading and the exposition of the Scripture seems to be constant. In fact, in almost every context and period, the reading and the exposition of the law was observed.

However, while all the roles of the synagogues as mentioned above are understood to have taken place in synagogues at various stages and places, the question remains, were these functions still being observed in the time of the New Testament? More specifically, where does the message of Jesus in Luke 4:16-30 fit in? This will be considered in Chapter Four when considering the role of synagogues in Luke.

However, before considering the various synagogues in Luke-Acts in Chapter Five and Luke 4:16-30 in particular, the following chapter will provide a description of the synagogue in New Testament..

Chapter Three – *The synagogue in the New Testament*

1 Introduction

In studying the συναγωγή in the rest of the New Testament, this chapter will focus primarily on the other gospels (3.2), Pauline epistles (3.3), James (3.4) and the book of Revelation (3.5). This is because they, with the exception of Paul, explicitly mention the synagogue (as place or gathering). Though the Pauline epistles are devoid of explicit references to the synagogue (Meeks 1983:81), their inclusion is suggested by Binder (1999), who argues for the implicit presence of the synagogue in the Pauline epistles. After concluding the survey of references to the synagogue in the New Testament, a comparison will be made of how this relates to what is known of the ancient synagogue in 3.6.

In studying the synagogue in the New Testament the three sociological approaches suggested by Theissen will be used. While the constructive approach will be used in the study of the synagogue in Matthew, Mark, John, James and Revelation, an analytical approach will be used for the study of the synagogue in the Pauline tradition. The use of the analytical approach in the Pauline tradition is necessary because it does not explicitly mention any synagogues. Thereafter a comparative approach will be used to ascertain the similarities and dissimilarities between the synagogue in the New Testament and the ancient synagogue as discussed in Chapter Two.

3.1.1 The occurrence of the term συναγωγή in the New Testament

The word συναγωγή occurs 56 times in the New Testament, eight times in Mark, nine times in Matthew, 15 times in the Gospel of Luke and 19 times in Acts, thus it is used 35 times by the author Luke. It is striking that Paul did not use the word συναγωγή.⁷⁸ The use of the word in

⁷⁸ Nor does Q. Matt 6:2, 5 and 9:35 seem to be exclusively Matthean (cf. Matt 23:34 with Luke 11:49 where συναγωγή is omitted) (Frankemolle 1993:293).

Mark affected the tradition; of its eight appearances, Matthew made use of five (not using Mark 1:21, 23, and 29); Luke made use of all except Mark 1:21. Mark suggests that the meaning of συναγωγή is without exception as a building/synagogue. Ἐπισυναγωγή is semantically hardly divergent and it occurs only in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 and Hebrews 10:25 (Frankemolle 1993:293).

While the term συναγωγὴν is used over 50 times in the gospels and Acts (White 1996:650-1), it is only used in the sense of a Jewish assembly in Acts 13:43 and in the sense of a Christian assembly in James 2:2. Acts 9:2 speaks of the “synagogues (congregations) in Damascus” (Acts 6:9) (Frankemolle 1993:293). In Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 a group of Jews (“pseudo-Jews”) who are said to have persecuted the Christian communities in Smyrna and Philadelphia are controversially referred to as the “συναγωγή (congregation) of Satan” instead of συναγωγή κυρίου (the synagogue of the Lord) .⁷⁹ However, there is no scholarly agreement concerning whether the designation “those who say that they are Jews and are not” refers to members of the Jewish nation or to syncretistic Christians (Ἰουδαῖος). But ἐπισυναγωγή as noted in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 speaks of the ἐπισυναγωγή in the context of the *parousia*, meaning the assembling of Christians with Christ (Frankemolle 1993:293).

3.2 The synagogue in Matthew and Mark⁸⁰

In view of the scholarly consensus that the Gospel of Mark was written about the time of the destruction of the Temple, and that Matthew and Luke depended upon Mark, one may assume that if the three evangelists had knowledge of any institutions of the Jews, it will certainly be

⁷⁹ Numbers 16:3; 20:4; 27:17; Josh 22:16; Ps 73:2 (LXX) (Frankemolle 1993:293).

⁸⁰ Tuckett (1992:268) considers Mark’s priority as the only solution to the problem of the synoptic gospel. This study accepts the consensus of the majority of scholars, but treats the gospels individually in their order of arrangement in the English version since it is not a redaction critical study. The dating of the synoptics has also been a matter of some debate, even among those who adhere to the two sources theory. Mark is usually dated to just before or after 70 CE on the basis of the apocalypse in Mark 13, whose preoccupation with the Temple’s destruction suggests that this event either had just happened or was about to happen when the gospel was written. The birthplace of Mark is held to be either Rome or Syro-Palestine. Q is dated even earlier than Mark, usually to the 50s, with nearly all researchers agreeing that this collection of *logia* and miracle accounts originated in Syro-Palestine. The date of Matthew is usually set in the late 80s, and likewise Luke. As with Q, the majority of researchers are of the opinion that it was written in Syro-Palestine (Binder 1999:67-8).

of the synagogues and not the Temple, which had by then been destroyed (Schwartzman 1953:116-7).

The synoptic gospels and the fourth gospel report that Jesus taught and performed healings in the synagogue (Matt 4:23; 13:54; 23; Mk 1:21-22, 23-27; Lk 4:16; Jn 6:59; 18:20) (Blickenstaff 2009:427). However, before looking at the synagogue in every individual gospel, a general overview will be presented of the way the synagogue is used in the gospels.

Though there is scholarly consensus on some form of two sources theory for understanding the literary relationship between the New Testament gospels which holds that Mark and the hypothetical document Q served as primary sources for Matthew and Luke (Charlesworth 2006:19), this chapter follows the approach of Runesson (2013:903-11) in discussing the synagogue in the gospels. Runesson describes the synagogue in each gospel according to the sequence of the books in our English version of the New Testament beginning with Matthew. It should also be noted, as stated earlier, that Luke will be treated in Chapter Four and Five alongside Acts.

The synoptic gospels contain over three dozen references to synagogues or their officials and for this reason play an important role in this research (Binder 1999:67). The term synagogue occurs nine times in Matthew, eight times in Mark, 15 times in Luke and two times in John. However, the word ἐκκλησία also appears in Matthew 16:18 and 18:17. Regarding officials, ἀρχισυναγώγων is used four times by Mark in the same pericope and twice by Luke; ἄρχων, on the other hand, is specifically used twice by Matthew and once by Luke. The noun ὑπηρέτης refers to a synagogue attendant and is used only once in Luke 4:20 (Runesson 2013:904). There are no occasions in the gospels where the term is used explicitly in conjunction with a synagogue. However, Matthew 5:25 describes court proceedings which often took place in the synagogue with punishment carried out by a ὑπηρέτης, which may refer to a synagogue attendant. The title γραμματεῖς occurs in both public and association synagogue settings, with the task of teaching found in Matthew 13:52 and Mark 1:21-22 and 12:39. Though πρεσβυτέρους is mentioned once in Luke 7:3-5 in a setting involving a synagogue, the other gospels associate this title with Jerusalem and the Temple, not with the synagogue (Runesson 2013:904). Having given a broad overview of the use of the synagogue in the gospels, the research will now turn to the treatment of the synagogue in each individual gospel.

3.2.1 The synagogue in the Gospel of Matthew

Scholars agree that the world of Matthew is primarily Jewish in nature (Hare 2000:264; Schwartzman 1953:115) in contrast to the gentile nature of the environments from which Mark and Luke emerged (Schwartzman 1953:115-6). The question that arises from this, is whether the author of Matthew, in writing in a Jewish context, identified with the synagogue as an institution?

In Matthew the synagogue is referred to as “their” synagogue (συναγωγὴν αὐτῶν) (Matt 12:9), a phrase Matthew is perceived to have taken over from Mark 1:39 (καὶ ἦλθεν κηρύσσων εἰς τὰς συναγωγὰς αὐτῶν εἰς ὅλην τὴν Γαλιλαίαν καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια ἐκβάλλων) (Lieu 1999:58). Matthew regularly refers to the synagogue of the Jews. The reference to the synagogues of the Jews in Matthew 4:32, 9:35, 10:17, 13:54, and 23:34 may specifically refer to the synagogues of the Pharisees as opposed to Matthew’s Jewish-Christian community (Hagner 1993:333).

A study of Matthew’s material shows that he adds only two items of synagogue information to those provided by Mark, namely about praying and almsgiving. Matthew contains nine references to a synagogue and in only one (12:9-10) is it associated with the Sabbath. In Matthew the synagogue is the scene of six principal types of activities: (1) According to Matthew 4:23, 9:35 and 13:54 the synagogue is the place in which Jesus does some of his teaching. (2) Jesus preaching in the synagogue is mentioned in 4:23 and 9:35. (3) In 4:23 and 9:35 there are three reports of healings performed by Jesus in the synagogue. (4) Prayer in the synagogue is referred to only in 6:5-16. (5) In 10:17 and 23:34 the synagogue is the scene of a flogging. (6) In 6:2 it is also the place in which one gives alms, while 23:6 contains a reference to the first seats, and in 9:18 and 9:23 Matthew refers to the synagogue leader.

Since the synagogue played the role of a storehouse, one can assume that Jesus was referring to a common practice when he warned his followers not announce it in the synagogue when they gave to those in need (Matt 6:2). Giving to the poor, praying, and fasting appear to have been characteristics of the Pharisees, and in this passage Jesus is not condemning these practices. However, Jesus calls on his followers to make sure that their motives are pure when they give alms to the needy. One can also assume that the Pharisees used almsgiving to gain favour and popularity, which Jesus viewed as wrong.

The Gospel of Matthew appears to be the only gospel of all four in the New Testament to mention both public and association synagogues. The references to a public synagogue are the majority (4:23; 6:2, 5; 9:35; 10:17; 13:54; 23:6; 23:34); while evidence of the latter is limited to the Pharisaic association synagogues (συναγωγὰς αὐτῶν) in 12:9 and the association of Matthew's audience themselves, the ἐκκλησίαις (16:18; 18:17) (Runesson 2013:905-6; Lieu 199:58). Commenting on this, Frankemolle (1993:296) is of the opinion that, despite the constant emphasis on continuity with the history of the Jewish faith, Matthew emphasises a separation between church and synagogue by using αὐτῶν with συναγωγή (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9). However, there are exceptions in the indirect mention of synagogues in Matthew 6:2 and 5 and 23:6. In Matthew 23:34, the Matthean Jesus speaks emphatically of "your synagogues"; "their synagogues" in Matthew 13:54 stands in tension with the identification of Nazareth as "his own country". One must agree with Frankemolle (1993:296) that, contrary to Mark's eschatological speech (Mk 13:9), Matthew's commissioning speech in Matthew 10:17 already presupposes being delivered up to councils and flogged in "their synagogues".

As far as Matthew is concerned, church and synagogue belonged to two different worlds and were entirely separate. Like Jesus, Christians will be killed, crucified, and persecuted from city to city in the future (Matt 23:34, 37). The Christologically based ἐκκλησία (Matt 16:18; 18:17) is therefore for Matthew an independent entity over against the συναγωγή. The distribution of the association synagogue as mentioned above, is limited to Galilee. In Matthew this is also the region where most of the narratives of the public synagogue are located (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 28:19-20). In comparison to Mark and Luke, Matthew recorded only one public synagogue in a particular place, which is Nazareth (Matt 13:54) (Runesson 2013:906). According to Hagner (1993:405), ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ αὐτῶν ("in their synagogue") is, as in Matthew 4:23, the synagogue of the Jews, and thus reflects a break with the other Jews. Here it is merely the synagogue of the people of Nazareth. The place of the association synagogue in Galilee mentioned in Matthew 12:9 is not given, but Mark and Luke indicate that the event took place in the public synagogue at Capernaum. In Matthew 23:34 the references to synagogues are used in a general sense, but the existence of the synagogue in Samaria is not mentioned (Runesson 2013:906). Matthew avoids providing the geographical locations of synagogues except for the general area of Galilee and in one instance that of the synagogue in the hometown of Jesus (Runesson 2013:906).

Other patterns in Matthew's references to the synagogue can also be discerned. Regarding leadership, the term ἀρχισυναγώγων is not used, instead the term ἄρχων is employed (Matt 9:18, 23). According to Runesson (2013:906), the lack of clarity on the synagogues' leadership leaves their settings open for interpretation, while the synoptic parallels use the term ἀρχισυναγώγων, which firmly establishes their institutional context. In Mark, the people in Capernaum react negatively to the scribes' teaching in direct response to Jesus' teaching in the synagogue (Mk 1:22). Matthew reports the same response of the crowds in reaction to the preaching on an unidentified Galilean hill (Matt 5:1; 7:29). However, in contrast to Mark's indiscriminate critique of the Jewish authorities, as will be discussed later, Matthew's focus is on the scribes and the Pharisees. As noted by Wilson (1995:51), there are more references to Pharisees in Matthew than in Mark, though Luke has approximately the same number as Mark. Scribes, or scribes and Pharisees together, are Matthew's favourite opponents. They are presented as involved in Jesus's death, but in contrast to the chief priests and elders, who are restricted to Jerusalem, they appear at all stages of Jesus' public career (Matt 21:45; 22:15; 23:1-6; 27:62).

According to Wilson (1995:51), the relentless negative portrait of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew provides an unpleasant tone, but even so, the vicious attack recorded in Matthew 23 comes as a surprise. The level of hostility is unparalleled earlier in Matthew, let alone in the other gospels. This suggests that the scribes and the Pharisees in this gospel represent contemporaries with whom the author was in conflict. In Matthew the scribes are portrayed as constituting the leadership of the synagogues. They are depicted as occupying the seat of Moses and as desiring the best seats in the synagogues. Moses' seat is usually interpreted as a type of judgement seat in the synagogue. In this position of power, the scribes and the Pharisees are presented as instigating a relentless campaign against the followers of Jesus (Matt 23:34). According to Binder (1999:73), they present a picture of the situation surrounding Matthew's community around 85 CE and not the pre-70 period.

While the persecution of Jesus in the synagogues is accepted to have taken place before the destruction of the Temple (Mk 13:9; 2 Cor 11:24) prompted by the Pharisees (Phil 3:5-6, Gal 1:13), there is no clear evidence that the scribes and Pharisees had the means or the desire to enact a wide-spread campaign against followers of Jesus prior to 70 CE. Binder (1999:73), however, warns against the danger of taking the passages where Matthew mentions leadership

in the synagogue as projecting Matthew's perception of the synagogue in his time back to the earlier period.

The synagogue as institution functions in different ways in the gospels. The synagogues in Matthew are primarily places in which teaching and healing took place, with an emphasis on teaching (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 13:54-58). In Matthew 4:23 and 9:35 the evangelist relates that the Galilean experiences of Jesus in the public synagogues were positive (Matt 13:57) and that what happened in what seems to be a Pharisaic association synagogue (Matt 12:9-14), was an exception. The synagogues in Galilee functioned positively as places where Jesus proclaims his message and in which the synagogue officials may be persuaded to follow and teach the ways of the kingdom (Matt 8:9; 13:52), even if there is also resistance (Matt 9:3). Many scribes were, however, influenced by the Pharisees in Matthew (Matt 5:20), in contrast to Mark 2:6 and Luke 5:30, where some scribes are pictured as being part of the Pharisaic party (Runesson 2013:906). The picture of the synagogue's function given by Matthew aligns with the functions of the synagogue outlined in Chapter Two, especially regarding teaching of the Scripture (2.7.1) by the Matthean Jesus.

As a public place, the synagogue is also used in Matthew to display behaviour not acceptable to the Matthean Jesus. Primarily this has to do with the hypocrisy of wanting to be seen doing pious works (giving alms and individual prayers) (Matt 6:2, 6). This charge of hypocrisy in the synagogue is levelled against the scribes and the Pharisees in Jerusalem (Matt 23:6). Both the Pharisees and the scribes are portrayed as having the authority in the synagogue to judge and flog followers of Jesus (Matt 23:34). In Galilee, this is the punishment that will be meted out to the prophets and sages sent out by the Matthean Jesus to further his mission, and will take place in the synagogues, controlled by the scribes linked with the Pharisees (Matt 23:2). The Matthean Jesus would send out messianic scribes, sages and prophets, all of who probably, like Jesus, came from Galilee. Like Jesus, their mission would end in suffering and death (Matt 23:34). This shared synagogue setting involving the Pharisees, the scribes and the followers of Jesus further demonstrates the involvement of the first evangelist in the Jewish society of his time (Runesson 2013:906).

From the above analysis, it is clear that Matthew is a rich source of material on the synagogue. The picture of the synagogue's function given by Matthew also aligns with the functions of the synagogue already outlined in Chapter Two, especially the teaching of the Scripture and the

addressing of disputes. In Matthew's gospel, we also have a record of both public and association synagogues. The former are the majority (Matt 4:23; 6:2, 5; 9:35; 10:17; 13:54; 23:6; 23:34); evidence of the latter is limited to a possible Pharisaic association ("their synagogue" in Matt 12:9) and the association synagogue of the Matthean community (ἐκκλησία [Matt 16:18; 18:17]) (Runesson 2013:905-6).

3.2.2 The synagogue in the Gospel of Mark

As noted above, Mark, which is accepted by most researchers to have been the earliest of the gospels, makes eight references to the synagogue, of which five associate the synagogue with the Sabbath. In Mark's gospel the synagogue is the locale for four key activities. In 1:21, 1:22 and 6:2 Jesus teaches in the synagogue and in 1:39 he drives out demons. Jesus furthermore engages in healings in the synagogue in 1:23-26, 1:39, and 3:3-5, and lastly, a whipping is administered in the synagogue as recorded in 13:9. Mark's references to the synagogue ends with a reference to the synagogues' appurtenances (καὶ πρωτοκαθεδρίας ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ πρωτοκλισίας ἐν τοῖς δείπνοις – "and have the most important seats in the synagogue and the places of honour at banquets" Mk 12:39 (NIV)). Mark also mentions the "first seat" and the ruler of a synagogue in Mark 5:22; 5:35; 5:36; and 5:38 (Schwartzman 1953:117-8).

It has been suggested that in the Gospel of Mark the "house", the "synagogue", and "Temple" served to establish the relationship between the revelation of Jesus and his community (Lieu 1999:57). However, the synagogue only provided a space for Jesus in the first section of the gospel since, after his rejection in his anonymous birthplace in 6:1-6, it is not specified that he appeared in a synagogue again (Lieu 1999:57). Mark 6:1-6 gives a commentary on what had taken place since the call of the Twelve by Jesus in Mark 3:13-5:43, and adds the rejection in his hometown to a section highlighting Jesus' teaching (3:20-4:1-34) and mighty deeds (4:34-5:43), the very elements of his ministry that confused those in his hometown (Guelich 1989:312).

In the narrative of Mark's gospel, unlike in Matthew, Jesus is only concerned with the public synagogue, and there is no hint of an association synagogue setting within which Jesus' followers determine the rules. Unlike Matthew, Mark carefully associates events with specific, identified public synagogues like Capernaum (Mk 1:21-29; 3:1; 5:21-43) and Nazareth, Jesus'

hometown (Mk 6:1-2) (Runesson 2013:906). While Matthew on two occasions refers to Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom in Galilean synagogues generally, Mark contains only one such editorial note (Mk 1:15; 1:39). While the synagogues in Judea are not mentioned explicitly, they are implied in the two general statements involving synagogues by Jesus in Jerusalem (Mk 12:39; 13:9). However, in Mark's gospel, Samaria is not mentioned. Mark's attention is on specific public synagogue settings in Galilee, with some statements embedded in a Judean setting (Runesson 2013:906-7).

One important aspect of the Gospel of Mark that must also be noted, is the fact that it programmatically introduces Jesus' mission, consisting of teaching and exorcism in a Capernaum synagogue (Runesson 2013:907; Runesson, Binder and Olsson 2008:26), while exorcisms in synagogues are lacking in the other two synoptic gospels. Whereas the Matthean gospel, which has no equivalent to the synagogue in Capernaum incident, relates Jesus to the synagogue through general sayings, Mark first gives a specific event in a local synagogue (Mk 1:21-28), and continues with a general application of such a setting to the area of Galilee. In view of this, one may assume that what happened in Capernaum occurred throughout Galilee (Mk 1:12-28; 1:39). The activities of the healing and exorcism as recorded in Mark are similar to those in Luke 4:15 and 31-37 but not to those in the Matthean narrative, which replaces the exorcism with healing as observed earlier (3.2.1). This implies that Luke followed Mark.

The synagogues references in the Gospel of Mark present Jesus as engaging in a public mission to all Jewish people. It is a movement that pulls crowds, rather than focussing on a small remnant. Mark's synagogue references place Jesus firmly in a public Galilean setting. It is in this setting that Mark's Jesus is mostly successful, and a ruler of the Capernaum synagogue named Jairus is portrayed recognising Jesus' authority and seeking assistance from him (καὶ ἔρχεται εἰς τῶν ἀρχισυναγῶγων, ὀνόματι Ἰαῖρος, καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὸν πίπτει πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ – "one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet" Mk 5:22). Here both the identity and title of Jairus, who came seeking help from Jesus, are given. The ruler of the synagogue is understood to have been an elected official highly esteemed in the Jewish community, who was responsible for arranging the synagogue service. Scribes are described as possibly local people who teach in the synagogue (Mk 1:22) and are presented negatively. Matthew's positive portrayal of them is absent (cf. Matt 8:19; 13:52; 23:34). The only scribe who receives some acceptance is one who is connected to the Temple in Jerusalem

(Mk 12:28-34). So, according to Mark 12:38-39, when related to the synagogue, scribes are presented as examples of people who behave in an unacceptable manner (Runesson 2013:907).

In terms of leadership, two groups with no formal role in the synagogue are mentioned interacting in this public setting: the Pharisees and Herodians (Mk 3:6). This is the only mention of either group in relation to the synagogue in Mark and differs from Matthew's emphasis on the Pharisees. According to this text the Pharisees and the Herodians vacated the synagogue in order to conspire against Jesus, showing political accord. This is later taken up in a Temple setting by the chief priest and the scribes as they collude with the Roman political power in Jerusalem to have Jesus executed (Runesson 2013:907). Mark's Jesus is pictured as levelling criticism proportionally at several Jewish groups including the Pharisees (Mk 7:5-15, 8:15), the scribes (Mk 2:6-12) and the Herodians (Mk 3:6). These groups of people, along with the priests, are depicted as Jesus' enemies (Mk 3:6; 12:13, 18, 14:1). However, despite this negative portrayal, Mark in certain places presents Jesus as friendly with the Jewish leaders, like when he responds to the plea of Jairus, a leader of the synagogue (Mk 5:22, 36, 38), or when he states that a certain scribe is "not far from the Kingdom" (Mk 12:34) (Binder 1999:72).

From the submission above, the general narrative progression in Mark is a largely successful synagogue interaction in Galilee by Jesus that ends in Jerusalem with him stating that his disciples will be charged and beaten in synagogues (Mk 13:9). It shows the continued involvement of the Jesus movement in Jewish public society and its administrative, political and religious institutions (Runesson 2013:907). The synagogue in this synoptic gospel as summarised by Schwartzman (1953:121), is a Jewish institution which is related in some way with the Sabbath and is concerned principally with acts of teaching, preaching and healing, and punishment. It is also understood to be a place of prayer, reading of the Prophets (as will be discussed further in the next chapter when treating Luke-Acts), and almsgiving.

3.2.3 The synagogue in the Gospel of John

Compared to Matthew, Mark and Luke, the Gospel of John has less material on the synagogue (Runesson 2013:908) with only five references to synagogues (Binder 1999:75). However, the focal role played by the synagogue in the Gospel of John cannot be overemphasised as the

separation from the synagogue through conflict appears to be formative in John's gospel (Lieu 1999:56).

In the Gospel of John, the synagogue is referred to explicitly in two verses and both verses concern public institutions. The first mentioned is identified by its Galilean location in Capernaum (Jn 6:59 – ταῦτα εἶπεν ἐν συναγωγῇ διδάσκων ἐν Καφαρναούμ). The second is a general reference made to the synagogues in the land, however this verse, according to Runesson, Binder and Olsson (2008:29), is a later addition to the text. The Gospel of John has several spatial notes of this kind. The reference “in the synagogue” (ἐν συναγωγῇ) is the most common one indicating a gathering in a specific space or building. An alternative translation would be “in a gathering”, or “when the people had come together (e.g. in a solemn assembly)”, but in John 6:56 the synagogue in Capernaum would have been the natural place for a public gathering. The word διδάσκων, which means “teaching”, refers to the way in which Jesus taught and explained the Scripture (Godet 1970:42).

As a programmatic statement, the second reference to the synagogue in John 18:20-21 stating that Jesus always taught in the synagogue (πάντοτε ἐδίδαξα ἐν συναγωγῇ), is an indication that, in John's mind, the synagogues were focal institutions used by Jesus to spread his message, and it is in the synagogue and the Temple that Jesus's interaction with people in the public space took centre stage. Presumably, the audience understood that the synagogues and the Jerusalem Temple were locations where events involving persons of importance in Jewish society took place (Jn 18:20-21). When Jesus is interrogated by Annas, who endeavours to see that he incriminates himself, Jesus recognises the attempt to incriminate him and makes it known to Annas that his teaching took place in public places (the Temple and the synagogue) and not in secret (Murray 1987:325). Unlike the synoptic gospels, John in his narrative includes a detailed account of a discussion between Jesus and Samaritans (Jn 4:1-42; 8:48), however, he never mentions Samaritan synagogues as a location for such contact (Runesson 2013:908).

Instead of court proceedings and punishment in the synagogue as mentioned in the synoptic gospels (Matt 10:17, Mk 13:9; Lk 12:11), the social importance of the synagogue is repeatedly confirmed by John on three occasions claiming that the followers of Jesus may be excluded from these institutions (ἄποσυνάγωγος). It is evident that differences between Jesus and his opponents in the synagogue became greater and clearer as John states that those who proclaimed Jesus as a Messiah were excluded from the synagogue (ταῦτα εἶπαν οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ

ὅτι ἐφοβοῦντο τοὺς Ἰουδαίους, ἥδη γὰρ συνετέθειντο οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἵνα ἐάν τις αὐτὸν ὁμολογήσῃ χριστόν, ἀποσυνάγωγος γένηται) (Blickenstaff 2009:427). Such exclusion was a punishment feared by both the Jewish authorities (ἄρχων) and the people (Jn 12:42; 9:22), and therefore Jesus prepared the disciples to suffer (Jn 16:2).

The threat of exclusion from the synagogues is connected narratively to the Ἰουδαῖος in John 9:22, which can be translated as “Judeans” (Runesson 2013:908). According to Runesson, Binder and Olsson (2008:42) John 9:22-23, 12:42-43 and 16:2-3 are linked by the very uncommon word ἀποσυνάγωγος, which does not appear in Greek texts before the Gospel of John was written, and has no clear corresponding word in Hebrew. It is understood to be a Greek construction, an adjective derived from a preposition phrase like ἀποδημία, which refers to “away from one’s country, away from home, abroad”, ἀπόφυσις, (having no tribes, foreign), or ἀποικος (away from home, abroad). According to Frankemolle (1993:296), the συναγωγή in John 6:59 and 18:20, which is neutral in and of itself, nonetheless stands in a negative semantic field characterised by ἀποσυναγωγός (Jn 9:22; 12:42; 16:2) as are the Ἰουδαῖοι as sons of the devil (8:44) (contextually Ἰουδαῖοι can also be used neutrally and positively).

It is not certain, however, whether the ἀποσυνάγωγος passages refer to public or association synagogues. The interpretation regarding this question has major implications for how we understand John’s portrayal of Jesus and the Jesus movement in relation to Jewish society. If the reference is to public synagogues, this would mean that Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, were excluded from public participation in Jewish society and denied any possibility of playing any role in decision making. Becoming a religious castaway in Judea was similar to losing one’s rights as a citizen (Runesson 2013:908). This scenario would have affected both members of the elite and the non-elite (Jn 12:42; 9:22). If the reference is to an association synagogue, the social effect would be much less severe and included only specific members of a certain association (Jn 12:42). This kind of punishment of excluding members was a well-known phenomenon in most other voluntary associations in the Greco-Roman society which included Jewish associations. Another possible consequence of such an understanding is the fact that the Pharisaic associations were inclusive in their membership enrolment. Runesson, Binder and Olsson (2008:43) state that John 12:42-43, 16:2-3 and 9:22-23 provide us with insights into an inner-Jewish process within the framework of the synagogue, where the Johannine Christ-believers lived together with their fellow Jews, possibly for many years.

However, probably after the destruction of the Temple, the Johannine Christ-believers were made “synagogueless”, or expelled from the synagogues with consequences for both sides. Some Jesus-believing Jews may have been drawn back to traditional Judaism by reneging on the confession of Jesus as Messiah, others may have confessed him and would have had to leave the synagogue. According to Runesson, Binder and Olsson (2008:43), from the Johannine perspective, the reason for this split can be attributed to the different acknowledgements of Jesus. This, together with change within the Johannine community, may provide the background for the glimpses of the Johannine community we find in these three passages mentioned above.

This scenario of being expelled from the synagogue raises the question on how a gospel that appears to be friendly to the Jews, can abruptly become anti-Jew in tone. In response to this, Klink’s (2008:117) insight is worthy of note. According to him, the Gospel of John depicts a deep-seated inter-Jewish tension involving heresy and group identity as observed above. John offers its own identity-forming portrayal of the conflict between what later became Judaism, and the early Christian movement. In the gospel, John endeavours to link the turmoil experienced by the readers with the experiences of Jesus himself; this is what Christ himself had to face, and what a generation of those who threatened Judaism with the Gospel, experienced.

Regarding synagogue officials, John has no record of any. The only term used by him that may refer to synagogue leadership is ἄρχων, which is used in relation to the Jerusalem administration (Jn 3:1; 7:26, 48; 12:42). There is also another single reference to γραμματεῖς (scribes) in the Jerusalem context that has nothing to do with synagogue leadership. The pericope in which it occurs, was possibly not part of the original gospel (Runesson 2013:908).

From the analysis above, and in agreement with Runesson (2013:908), it is quite clear that while Mark, and possibly Luke (as we shall see in the next chapter), mention Jesus’ teachings, healings and exorcisms in synagogue settings, and while Matthew also states that Jesus taught and healed, John’s account is limited to teaching only. It also seems that John took Matthew’s rhetorical tendency to oversimplify and delocalise Jesus’ activities further with his comments in John 18:20 and his consequent dependence upon his audience’s knowledge of the social reality of Jewish public life.

3.3 The synagogue in the Pauline tradition

It is striking that the Pauline epistles⁸¹ are devoid of any information on the synagogue and do not use the term synagogue for an assembly of Jesus followers at all (Binder 1999:64; Lieu 1999:60; Meeks 1983:81; Blickenstaff 2009:427; Frankemolle 1993:293). However, Binder (1999:64), who concentrates on the seven letters⁸² that are accepted to have been written by Paul, argues that they are very useful for understanding which institution took over from the synagogue. A supposition that has already been hinted at in Chapter Two (2.11), is that the synagogue provided a basis for the church. This will be discussed further when this study attempts to determine how the present church can appropriate the function and the role the synagogue played to meet the needs of its community in Chapter Six (6.4). Moreover, as observed by Binder (1999:64), the undisputed Pauline letters serve as an important control for Acts' record of the missionary activities in the synagogue.

Referring to the lack of references to the synagogue, Binder (1999:64) states that Paul wrote his letters to churches he either established, prayed for or hoped to visit (Rom 1:10; 15:23), with the sole aim of addressing internal disputes or disagreements. This is clear from Paul's involvement with a Jewish group in most of his letters. However, despite a lack of explicit references to the synagogue in the Pauline letters, it should not be assumed that Luke created Paul's interaction with the synagogue in Acts in its entirety as there seems to be evidence in the Pauline letters that Paul used the synagogue (Binder 1999:64). 1 Corinthians 9:20 states that "To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as

⁸¹ Even though the New Testament contains 13 letters entitled "Letter of Paul to..." (Malina and Pilch 2006:1), according to Matera (2007:100), many contemporary scholars question the Pauline authorship of Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus, designating them as Deutero-Pauline, while the other seven letters (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Thessalonians, and Philemon) are described as undisputed Pauline letters (Malina and Pilch 2006:1; 2013:1). It is accepted that the disputed letters were written by second and third generation members of Jesus groups who lived in the Pauline tradition (Malina and Pilch 2006:1). Malina and Pilch (2013:1) offer reasons why these letters cannot be accepted as Pauline, stating that, "their contents point to a period after Paul's death; the interpretation of Jesus is not Paul's and the concern for non-Israelites mirrors a situation after Paul". However, Christian churches consider all these letters in the New Testament canonical, meaning inspired by God, and therefore normative (Malina and Pilch 2006:1). Since this issue is not a focus of this study, all the letters within the broad Pauline tradition are treated together.

⁸² Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon.

one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law”, which can imply that Paul attended Jewish gatherings in the local synagogue. Further corroboration of Acts’ placement of Paul in the synagogue is the apostle’s naming of Crispus and Sosthenes as converts or associates (1 Cor 1:1, 14). These men, according to Acts 18:8, 17, were ἀρχισυναγώγοι (rulers of the synagogue) in Corinth. According to Binder (1999:65), and as Meeks concedes (1983:81), Paul may never have used this title, but the mention of the names does partially confirm the Acts account.

Contrary to the letters of Paul, there is evidence in the Acts account that Paul began his missionary work in the synagogue. In Acts 13:14-41 Paul stands in the synagogue in Pisidia Antioch, preaching the Gospel with the aim of sharing knowledge of Christ. In Acts 17:1-5, Paul is said to frequent the synagogue in Thessalonica where he reasons with the attendants of the synagogue regarding the death and resurrection of Christ. Still in Berea, Paul also speaks in the synagogue, resulting in many people coming to the knowledge of Christ (Acts 17:10-12). In Corinth, Paul engages in evangelistic activity (Acts 18:1-18), where he is busy in the synagogue on the Sabbath trying to influence both Jews and Greeks by preaching and testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. Many Corinthians believed his message whereupon they were baptised. Again in Ephesus Paul preaches in the synagogue and argues about the kingdom of God (Acts 19:8-10).

In 2 Corinthians 3:14-15, Paul possibly refers to the reading of the law (Torah) in the synagogue: “But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. ... Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.” According to Binder (1999:65), the negative attitude suggests that by the time this segment was written, Paul had either decided not to attend or was denied access to the synagogue (Binder 1999:65). In line with this, the last time Acts pictures Paul inside a synagogue, is in Acts 19:8, where he frequents the synagogue in Ephesus for three months at the beginning of his ministry in that town. After this Paul breaks his ties with the synagogue and moves into the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). This can be seen to correlate with the attitude of the passage 2 Corinthians, since the document was written towards the end of Paul’s residence in Ephesus (Binder 1999:65). So one can rightly say that, while the synagogue is not explicitly mentioned in the Pauline epistles, it may be implied in a passage like 1 Corinthians 9:20, or implicitly mentioned in terms of its function, which aligns with key aspects of Paul’s ministry of teaching and preaching the Gospel.

3.4 The synagogue in James

In the book of James, the word συναγωγή is only used in reference to a Christian assembly in James 2:2 (Binder 1999:65). According to Martin (1988:61), the use of συναγωγή in this passage is unusual, as the more common term, ἐκκλησία (5:14) could have been used. However, some early Christian churches apparently also called their meetings by this name (Mitton 1966:83; Frankemolle 1993:293-4). Martin (1988:57) is of the opinion that James is either describing the church gathered for worship, assuming that synagogue in v. 2 means the meeting place for Christians on the Sabbath, or a church court where the congregation has assembled to listen to a judicial case. For this reason, the συναγωγή here should be understood as an aspect of the Christian assembly similar to 1 Corinthians 6:1-6 and Matthew (Martin 1988:57).

The passage (2:1-12) in which James 2:2 is located, can be isolated as the third in James' series of themes that warn against disregarding the πτωχός (poor) in preference for the χρυσοδακτύλιος (rich).⁸³ The rich man mentioned here suggests someone who is highly placed or aspiring to a political office, possibly visiting the congregation to seek support. However, the wearing of fine garments and rings was a common mark of abundance in the community (Martin 1988:61). The contrast between those in humble positions and the wealthy is made by using practical examples. The same contrast is illustrated with the recounting of a dramatic encounter between two social types when they enter the assembly (Martin 1988:57).

James provides a clear description of an incident of partiality that likely happened when the assembly gathered for worship. The use of the conjunction εἰάν suggests a theoretical example. This may be James' way of pre-informing and reminding the recipients of his letter of an actual case of poverty that occurred in the Christian community in v. 6: "But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?" (Kugelman 1980:24-5). This, according to Kugelman (1980:25), further emphasises God's special concern for the poor, lowly and afflicted who are truly humble. Poverty, like all kinds of suffering and deprivation, is evil. However, riches are not bad, riches are a blessing, but from James' point of view it is evil when it becomes an obstacle to faith and following Christ if it prevents complete surrender to his lordship. The use of the synagogue

⁸³ The conventional Greek word for the rich (πλούσιος) is not used here, suggesting a circumlocution of wealthy Christians or pagans, depending on how the identity of the person in v. 3 is understood.

here suggests a gathering of believers who were pre-warned against prejudice against the poor in the synagogue. Since one of the functions of the synagogue as stated in 2.7.7 is “charity and almsgiving”, it may be that James uses the term συναγωγή instead of ἐκκλησία to remind his readers of this function. It may also suggest that the contemporary readers of James frequented the synagogue and the only way to help them understand the negative effect of partiality for the rich was to use the synagogue instead of the church as an example. Moreover, some early Christian churches, as observed above, also described their own meetings with the term συναγωγή (Mitton 1966:83).

3.5 The synagogue in Revelation

In the book of Revelation, we have an entirely different picture of the synagogue. Of the letters written to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, two letters, one to Smyrna and the other to Philadelphia, seem to present a different picture of the synagogue (Weinrich 2005:24). Here the synagogue is portrayed in a negative manner. In Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 the writer, “John of Patmos”, describes his opponents in both Smyrna and Philadelphia as a “synagogue⁸⁴ of Satan” (Frankfurter 2001:403). This negative image of a “synagogue of Satan” was directed at churches, which calls for careful consideration.

In the letters written to the seven churches, the writer, who claims to have received this message from Jesus through an angel (Rev 1:1), paints a picture of the conditions in which Christians lived during this period (Lohse 1993:106). The message concerns their relationships with the Jews living in the area, and describes fierce controversies. The message from Jesus to John through the angel reads: “I know your afflictions and your poverty⁸⁵ – yet you are rich – I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not but are a synagogue of Satan.” (Rev

⁸⁴ Aune (1997:165) in defining the word “synagogue”, refers to it as a Jewish community that met for worship, which should be differentiated from the place where such groups met. He also warns that the term should not be taken as being peculiar to Jewish gatherings, as there are a number of terms that Jews in Asia Minor also used for their places of worship, which include, προσευχή, (place of prayer) (Antiq 14.112-13) and Σάββατο (Antiq 16.162-65), possibly a word for a private home in which Sabbath worship meetings were held.

⁸⁵ Richard (1995:57) attributes the cause of their poverty to distress that can be momentary (persecution in Rev 2:10) or systematic (oppression and exclusion). According to Thomas (1992:162) their poverty is as a result of persecution (cf. Rev 2:10).

2:9). In a similar message to the church in Philadelphia, John says: “I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars – I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you” (Rev 3:9).

While the two passages above are fully quoted for clarity of what is embedded, the controversial phrase “the synagogue of Satan” is the primary focus.

Lohse (1993:106) states that, even more so than readers in ancient times, our generation acknowledges that there are harsh statements embedded in the two passages. It is surprising that a writer with a Jewish background could even speak in such terms (Hemer 1986:67). Why would a Christian speak of Jews in such a manner? What was behind these words? And what can one learn about the relationship that existed between Christians and Jews in the days of John (Lohse 1993:106)?

In view of the controversial messages in the passages in question, Lohse (1993:107) and Aune (1997:164) are of the opinion that the ways of Jews and Christians began to separate in the days of Revelation. According to Aune (1997:164), the phrase “synagogue of Satan” may reflect how the church began to separate from the synagogue, as it is almost impossible to imagine it happening while they still worshipped together. It is possibly related to John 8:44, where Jesus says that the father of the Jews, is the Devil. The phrase “the synagogue of Satan” is also similar to the congregation of Belial (an alternative name for Satan) in 2 Corinthians 6:15. The phrase may also reflect a cosmological dualism that divides the world of humanity into separate and hostile groups, with Christians by implication belonging to the synagogue of the Lord (Aune 1997:165). The concept of the people of God is also reflected in the phrase συναγωγήν τοῦ κυρίου translated in the LXX (Deut 16:3; 20:4; 26:9; 31:16), signifying “the assembly belonging to the Lord”. The people who are addressed as people who say they are Jews, are no doubt Jews by birth, but in a radical spiritual sense, they are not. According to Hughes (1990:41), the βλασφημία⁸⁶ of these violent enemies of the church, consists of their rejection of anything that God has done in and through his incarnate Son. The description

⁸⁶ “But anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or foreigner, utters blasphemy against the Lord and must be cut off from the people of Israel. Because they have despised the Lord’s word and broken his commands, they must surely be cut off; their guilt remains on them” (Num 15:30-31).

“synagogue of Satan” depicts them as perpetrators of a perverted, pseudo-Christian gospel, which was, in reality, no gospel at all (Hughes 1990:41).

According to Thomas (1992:281), a true Jew in Revelation 2:9, is one who professes Jesus as his Lord and Saviour and has been forgiven, while a false Jew is one who not only refuses to accept Jesus, but also to profess him. Physically, they are descendants of Abraham or proselytes to Judaism, but obviously not Christian (Phil 3:3; Rom 2:28, 29). This also implies that Christians are the true Israelites – a view that is widespread in the New Testament (Jn 4:23-24; Gal 6:16; Phil 3:3; 1 Pet 2:9-10) (Lohse 1993:110; Aune 1997:175-6). The word βλασφημία (slander) likely refers to the Jewish role in denouncing the Christians to Roman authorities (Hemer 1986:67). Since Jews had special status exempting them from certain cultic obligations, Jewish Christians had the option of taking advantage of those benefits by claiming to be Jews (Aune 1997:176).

According to Aune (1997:176), there is evidence in Bithynia ca. 110 CE of pagan *delatores* (“accusers” in criminal proceedings) denouncing Christians to the authorities. These accusers had to prosecute the case in court. The prediction in Revelation 2:10 that Christians will shortly be imprisoned, shows the seriousness of the situation at hand. So, the message in the book of Revelation is intended to strengthen and comfort Christians so that they will remain faithful in the coming time of tribulation. They are encouraged to not surrender their confession in Christ as their only Lord and Saviour; they are not allowed to follow the Roman requirement to worship the Caesar, and they may not compromise on this (Lohse 1993:109).

It appears that in the days of Revelation, Christians and Jews were living together as a body, but over time the relationship between Christians and Jews became bitter as a result of persecution; particularly the Smyrna Jews were willing tools of the pagan authority against the Christians. It is also certain that the reference to synagogue, as used here, refers to a congregation, those who gathered and planned their assault, not the building (Lensky 1961:98). Blickenstaff (2009:427) warns that the conflict in the synagogue as embedded in the book of Revelation should be understood as a disagreement among 1st-century Jews who were battling a great complexity of belief, and not as a condemnation of Jews or Judaism.

Frankemolle (1993:292) adds that the extent to which Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 (“synagogues of Satan”) are characterised by anti-Jewish tendencies, it is probably more a reworking of material

based on local tensions within the synagogue than a grievance with synagogues in general. He also suggests that post-New Testament neutral or positive usage of the word συναγωγή for Christian congregations, needs to be evaluated with regard to temporal and geographical factors. According to him, the relationship between a church and a synagogue in a particular location must be carefully considered, as Christianity was not in a relationship of tension with Judaism everywhere, as is reflected in the continued use of συναγωγή to refer to Christian assemblies. It should, however, be accepted that the relationship between the church and the synagogue was not always cordial either. At times and in places there was serious disagreement, as one can gather from this passage. Aune (1997:164) even views the labelling of the congregation as “synagogue of Satan” as reflecting the period when Christians began to separate themselves from the synagogue.

3.6 Comparison of the ancient synagogue and the synagogue in the New Testament

Having discussed the synagogue in the New Testament, including its role and functionaries, it is important to compare the synagogue in the New Testament with the ancient synagogue as discussed in Chapter Two. This will be done in line with Theissen’s identification of comparative approaches (1.7) in sociological studies which compare primitive Christian sources with contemporary parallels. I will compare the results of the survey of the function of the ancient synagogue with how it is described in the New Testament, to ascertain whether the synagogue in the New Testament operated as the ancient one did. The function and the functionaries of the ancient synagogue and the New Testament synagogue will therefore be compared in the following table, revealing possible differences and similarities.

Table 2

| Functionaries of the ancient synagogue | Functionaries of the synagogue in the New Testament | Functions of the ancient synagogue | Functions of the synagogue in the New Testament |
|---|--|---|--|
| ἀρχισυναγωγή | ἀρχισυναγωγή: Matt 9:10. | Reading and exposition of the Scripture | διδασκαλία (Teaching): |

| | | | |
|-------------|--|---------|---|
| | | | Mk 1:21-22; 6:2; Matt 4:23; 9:35; 13:54; Jn 18:20. κήρυγμα (Preaching): Mk 1:39; Matt 4:23; 9:35. |
| ἄρχων | ἄρχων: Matt 9:10. | | . |
| γραμματεῖς | γραμματεῖς: Matt 13:52; Mk 1:21-22; 12:39. | | φαρμακευτικός (Healing): Mk 3:3; Matt 4:23; 9:35. |
| ὕπηρετης | | | |
| πρεσβύτερος | | | εξορκισμός (Exorcism): Mk 1:39. |
| ἱερεὺς | | | τιμωρία, μαστίγωμαοι μαστίγωμα (Punishment): Mk 13:9; Matt 10:17; 23:34; Lk 12:11. |
| | | | προσευχές (Prayer): Matt 6:5-8. |
| | | Charity | ἐλεημοσύνη (Almsgiving): Matt 6:2. |

The table above presents the functions and the functionaries of the ancient synagogue and the synagogue in the New Testament. Regarding functionaries, the ancient synagogue had five functionaries while the New Testament mentions only three. In terms of functions, the ancient synagogue seems to have had more than those in the New Testament. Functions include prayers and charity (almsgiving) and possibly reading and exposition of Scripture, which can be likened to be teaching and preaching in the New Testament. So the prayers, almsgiving, teaching and preaching mentioned in the New Testament, may have taken the place of reading and exposition of Scripture in the ancient synagogue. Presumably, mention of punishment in the New Testament could imply that the synagogue still functioned as a court. But the functions

of a treasury, manumission space, council hall and society house, place of refuge, museum, archive, school, festivals, holidays, and communal dining space, cannot be clearly identified in the New Testament. Likewise, healing and exorcism, which are mentioned in the New Testament, are not found in references to the ancient synagogue. The number of functionaries and functions in the ancient synagogue are more than those mentioned in the New Testament.

From the above analysis, it is evident that the manner in which the synagogue is described as organising itself in the New Testament, differs in some respects from the ancient synagogue. It also supports the assertion, both in terms of functionaries and function, that there was no uniformity, or set standard for how to organise a synagogue. This implies that the functionaries and the functions evident in the ancient synagogue were not a standard for the organisation of synagogues everywhere, and that context determined what should be done by who.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined the references to synagogues in the New Testament. In the gospels the synagogue is portrayed as a Jewish institution which is connected with the Sabbath and is concerned principally with acts of teaching, preaching, healing and punishment. It is also understood to be a place of prayer, reading of the Prophets, and almsgiving. While some of these functions took place or were practiced in the synagogue, giving the impression that the New Testament understanding of the synagogue also aligns with the practices of the ancient synagogue, some functions of the ancient synagogue as analysed in 3.6, are not found in the New Testament. Likewise, the New Testament mentions some functions that are not found in the ancient synagogue. The function of the synagogue was apparently contextual. It has also been noted that some synagogues were built by non-Jews.

If the constructive approach is applied to the texts of the New Testament (with the exception of the Pauline tradition where an analytical approach was used) in regard to how it describes the synagogue, it becomes apparent that the texts emanated from different social situations. Matthew, for example, refers to “their” synagogue (συναγωγὴν αὐτῶν) (Matt 12:9) in a phrase taken over from Mark 1:39 to indicate that the group he was writing for, had separated from the Jewish synagogues. The Gospel of Matthew also mentions both public and association synagogues (cf. Chapter Three), linking the association synagogues to the Pharisees (Matt 12:9)

and Matthew's audience (Matt 16:18; 18:17). This distinction between association and public synagogues will be given further attention when discussing the synagogue in Luke-Acts in Chapter Five.

Using an analytical approach, the fact that the Pauline epistles (3.3) make no explicit mention of synagogues, even though Binder suggests it is implied, could signal that the Pauline communities had severed their ties to the synagogue. It should, however, be noted that the implied use of the synagogue in the Pauline epistles aligns with the function of the synagogue as outlined in Chapter Two (2.7.1) of the reading and exposition of Scripture.

John, for example, discloses how the followers of Jesus were expelled from the synagogue (3.2.3). This indicates that in the period in which John was written, conflict between the followers of Jesus and the synagogue had become the norm. In James (3.4) the term "synagogue" is, however, used in connection with a Christian assembly, which could point to a good relationship between the synagogue and the church at the time it was written. James 2:2 could suggest that the epistle was written at a time when the relationship between rich and poor was more of an issue than the relationship between Jews and the followers of Jesus. In Revelation (3.5), the opposite appears to be the case, as is revealed by the controversial phrase which includes the term "synagogue" to refer to a group associated with the church as "the synagogue of Satan" in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9, who claim to be Jews but are not.

According to this chapter it appears that the synagogues in the New Testament are presented in both a negative and a positive light which reflects the relationship between the various groups of Jesus followers and the Jewish synagogues in their specific socio-historical situations. While the synagogue is often presented as a place of teaching, preaching, healing and exorcism, it is often also the locale where Jesus and his disciples were opposed to the point of being driven out of the Jewish synagogues.

In view of the focus of this study, Chapter Five will focus specifically on the synagogue in Luke-Acts, with a special focus on Luke 4:16-30 since it contains several references to both Diaspora and Palestinian synagogues (Levine 1996:427-8; 2003:6; Binder 1999:227). Luke records Jesus' activities in several 1st-century Galilean synagogues and Jesus' participation in the Sabbath morning services in Nazareth, as well as Paul's in Asia Minor (Lk 4:14-44; Acts 17:1-40). In both passages, Jesus and Paul customarily attend a synagogue. In Luke 4:16-30

Jesus not only uses the synagogue for religious purposes, but also as a place for meeting the needs of the people in the community.

Chapter Four – *Socio-historical context of Luke-Acts*

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two the origin and function of the synagogue were examined. Studies show that the origin of the synagogue is shrouded in mystery and may never be fully known (2.2). However, the synagogue was clearly a well-known institution in both Palestine and in the Diaspora in the 1st century CE and the intertestamental period. It is therefore not surprising that the survey undertaken of the synagogue in the New Testament in Chapter Three indicated that it is mentioned in most New Testament books.

The focus of this chapter is on the socio-historical context of Luke-Acts. In determining the socio-historical context, attention will first be given to the dating of Luke-Acts. The reason for establishing this approximate date is to determine with which period of the synagogue's development the references to the synagogue in Luke-Acts must be compared. Attention will also be paid to the possible recipients of Luke-Acts as well as the unity⁸⁷ and composition of Luke-Acts. The focus on the literary composition of Luke-Acts in general, and the Gospel of Luke in particular, is important in order to ascertain if Luke 4:16-30 should be understood as providing an indication of the strategic function of the synagogue in the Lukan Jesus' ministry.

⁸⁷ The only clear evidence that connects the Gospel of Luke with Acts is the prologue of the two books. In both books the recipient is identified as Theophilus. Acts 1:1 reads like a summary of the material in Luke and begins geographically in Jerusalem where the Gospel of Luke ended (Lk 24:52-53; Acts 1:9-10) (Stein 1992:21-2). The Gospel of Luke also seems to have been written with Acts in mind (Lk 1:1-4; Acts 1:1), suggesting that without the Acts of the Apostles, the aim of the gospel would not have been achieved. Acts should thus be understood as being written with the aim of completing what the gospel had begun.

4.2 The socio-historical location of Luke-Acts' composition

Since this study undertakes a socio-historical study of the synagogue in Luke-Acts,⁸⁸ it is important to consider the historical date and socio-historical location of the composition of Luke-Acts.

4.2.1 The date for the composition of Luke-Acts

Three views have traditionally been proposed for the composition of Luke-Acts.⁸⁹

The first date for the composition of Luke-Acts is 140-150 CE (Garland 2011:32; Barrett 2002:xxv). The argument for this late date is based on the interpretation of a presumed theological intention of Acts as an attempt to heal the rift between gentile and Jewish Christianity. The differences between the apostles Peter and Paul are also presumed to have been reworked by Luke to harmonise with the Acts of the Apostles. Luke-Acts (especially Acts) could also have been written as an anti-Marcionite text around this time (Garland 2011:31).

The second date that has been suggested for Luke-Acts, is earlier, around 61-63 CE, when Paul was expecting his release from prison in Rome. It is assumed that since Luke did not record any events after this date, Luke-Acts must have predated this time. It is also often suggested that Luke referred to the destruction of Jerusalem to demonstrate that Jewish rulers were instrumental in its destructions while Christianity was innocent in this regard. The sudden end of the book without any information as to what happened to Paul, also supports this view

⁸⁸ According to Powell (2009:150), both Luke and Acts were originally anonymous. The earliest available evidence for the authorship of Luke-Acts comes from the testimony of the church fathers (around the 2nd century), who all agree that Luke was the author of both Luke and Acts (cf. Stein 1992:21; Maddox 1982:6-7; Garland 2011:21; Schnabel 2012:22). References to Luke as the writer of Luke-Acts can be found in the Bodmer Papyrus and the Muratorian Canon (Stein 1992:21). It has, however, been accepted by most scholars that the references to Luke were not part of the original manuscript and were only added when it became necessary to differentiate it from other gospels.

⁸⁹ This lack of consensus, as noted by Garland (2011:310), can be attributed to the scant evidence available on the subject matter.

(Barker and Kohlenberger 1994:208). In view of this, Acts is suggested to have been written between 61 and 65 CE, and the Gospel of Luke just before that (Peterson 2009:5; Barker and Kohlenberger 1994:5).

Garland (2011:30), however, criticises attempts to date Luke-Acts early by calling it mere guesswork based on contemporary assumptions. According to him, one cannot impose on Luke what he would have included or not. According to Garland, Luke was not interested in giving a record of Paul's life, but in the progress of the Gospel and therefore, according to his intent, his gospel ends at the right place. If he had continued, it would probably also have become necessary for the author of Luke-Acts to record the death of some of the apostles like James, Peter, and Paul, as well as the persecution of the church in Rome and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, which would have weakened his theme of the Gospel being proclaimed "without hindrance" (ἀκωλύτως) (Acts 28:31).

In the words of Harrison (1986:23-24): "While the dating of Acts around 62 AD seems the most likely in view of Paul's circumstances, one ought not to exclude the possibility that it appeared some years later largely because Acts is later than the Gospel of Luke and the gospel seems to show the writer's knowledge of Mark.⁹⁰ Luke would then have to be dated before 60 AD, though many find this view difficult to accept. But the attempt to relate Acts to the close of the century has no compelling reasons in its favour."

In view of the rejection of both a late and a very early date for Luke and Acts, a period between the two dates is seen as the most likely date for their composition. The third proposed date, the period between 75 and 95 CE, is considered by scholars like Barrett (2002:xxv), Garland (2011:32) and Esler (1987:29) as the more likely period.⁹¹ Esler (1987:29) argues that it is very difficult to determine a more precise date for the composition of Luke-Acts than the period between 70 and 95 CE, but that it appears that Acts was written in the mid to late 80s or the

⁹⁰ The prologue of Luke mentions the existence of many accounts written prior to this gospel (Lk 1:1), which Luke made use of. One of these is the Gospel of Mark, which can be dated approximately 65 CE (Edwards 2015:11; Barker and Kohlenberger 1994:207).

⁹¹ Garland favours the period between 75 and 90 CE and Esler 70-95 CE, while according to Townsend (1984:58), the date of Luke-Acts cannot be determined conclusively because of the lack of evidence and it would be best to consider it as written approximately between the 60s and the early 90s CE.

early 90s of the 1st century CE. Dunn (1996:x), whose view has been broadly accepted, argues that while not much depends on the date of the composition, he considers Acts to have been written in the time of the second generation of Christians (after the 80s), and provides three pieces of evidence to support his opinion: (1) Acts is a volume written sometime after the Gospel of Luke, usually thought to be dependent on the Gospel of Mark (usually dated to the late 60s or 70s); (2) It was likely written by someone who had been a companion of Paul; and (3) The writer's portrayal of earliest Christianity seems to reflect the concerns of the post-Pauline generation.

This study accepts the third view on the basis of the argument made by Dunn and because the author clearly made use of Mark. It will therefore treat Luke-Acts as a 1st-century document written in a period when the synagogue was already a well-established institution.

4.2.2 The social setting of Luke-Acts

According to Esler (1987:1-2), Luke appears to have been an author who identified with his readers on religious, social, political, and economic levels in that he passionately believed that the Gospel, if correctly understood and presented, was a message of salvation that concerned all aspects of their lives. As such it would impact positively on their daily lives. It can be assumed that various social and political factors formed the background of Luke's theology and that Luke composed his gospel in response to the social and political pressure his community was experiencing, since in his world the theological, social, religious, and political lives of people were interwoven. The events Luke-Acts narrates did not occur in a vacuum. Luke furthermore assumed a viewpoint suggesting that Jesus and the early church were clearly concerned with the societal dimension of the good news.⁹²

In view of the abovementioned and based on the nature of present research, it is important to understand the social situation of the Lukan community. It is, however, not an easy task to determine the social setting of Luke-Acts (Robbins 1991:305). It is, for example, uncertain if

⁹² Luke-Acts is in this sense particularly relevant to the contemporary Nigerian society (6.4) since it is concerned with the poor, women, and those on the margins of society (Neyrey 1991:x; Larson 1983:12-3).

the writer of Luke-Acts was a second or third generation Christian. Or what the author's ethnic origin was. Was he a resident of a town, or city, and in what part of the empire did he reside? What was his community's relationship with the Jews and the gentiles?

Luke-Acts, both in terms of time and periods described, and the topography covered, provides a multifaceted and diverse world for the investigation of the social context of the New Testament. The Gospel of Luke continuously makes references to Palestinian society, while Acts mentions places like Jerusalem, Antioch, Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome (Neyrey 1991:x). It can be postulated that the social situation in which Luke's audience lived was an urban setting in the Eastern Mediterranean region⁹³ in terms of the issues that he addresses (Moxnes 1994:379). Its context was shaped by the culture of the Hellenistic city (Malina and Neyrey 1991:25-65; Moxnes 1991:241-70).

Reading through Luke-Acts and its focus on universality, it appears that Luke had a broader audience in mind than those of a single locale when he was composing Luke-Acts. His works appear to be especially suitable for the gentile world. While Matthew wrote from a Jewish perspective and Mark for action-conscious Romans, Luke wrote from a gentile viewpoint in good Greek for the broad Greek-speaking world (Dayton 2009:1130).⁹⁴ This is evident in his genealogy of Jesus, which goes back to Adam (Lk 3:38). Unlike in Matthew 2:2, Jesus as king is not just the king of the Jews, but of all people. Prophecies that are emphasised include all flesh (Lk 3:5-6) and God's concern for the gentiles is illustrated (Lk 4:25-30). For Luke, the gentiles were clearly part of God's redemptive work and a concern of Jesus. His gospel is for gentiles and the world in general (Dayton 2009:1130).

In the early events that took place in Jerusalem as recorded in the first chapters of Acts, Peter's sermon portrays Jesus as the fulfilment of God's promises to the nation of Israel. This is also the case in Stephen's long recounting of Israel's history, which places Jesus within the frame of Israel's history. However, the chapters that follow emphasise the inclusion of gentiles in the

⁹³ There is no agreement yet about a particular city. Esler (1987:26) is of the opinion that Luke had a city in mind and suggests Ephesus. There is, however, no way of clearly establishing for which city he wrote as according to Moxnes (1994:380) Antioch must also be considered.

⁹⁴ Luke, for example, explains Jewish commonplaces to his gentile readers, like that Nazareth was in Galilee (Lk 1:26) and that the feast of unleavened bread was called the Passover (Lk 22:1).

redemptive programme of God. For example, according to Luke (Acts 15), the Jerusalem council makes it clear that gentile believers do not need to become Jews themselves, but only need to be integrated into the ongoing history of Israel because gentile conversion to faith in Jesus as Saviour, was part of God's plan (Gaventa 2006:36; Schnabel 2012:37). The gentiles needed to be reminded that their acceptance by Jesus was not a mistake or an accident but part of God's original plan, a plan that can be traced back to creation.

4.3 Luke as historian

An important part of a socio-historical reconstruction is to determine how accurate the sources are. It is thus necessary to determine how Luke the writer should be viewed. Is he a reliable source of information on the 1st-century synagogue?

Of the four canonical evangelists, Luke was the closest to being a historian in that he, like other ancient historians, sought to provide a permanent account of the extraordinary events that gave birth to the new movement of Jesus-followers which he was fortunate to be part of (Marshall 1978:35).⁹⁵ This is already apparent in the preface of Luke-Acts in that it, according to Edward (2015:23), is similar to introductions of other Hellenistic works on history and science.⁹⁶ Luke was the only evangelist in the New Testament who offered such an introduction to his gospel. This, according to Carroll (2008:721), indicates that the author was highly educated and at home in Hellenistic culture, if not among the social and literary elites in the Roman world, and able to address an educated figure in the Greco-Roman world (Garland 2011:22; Stein 1992:20). Luke-Acts is written in sophisticated Greek⁹⁷ (Carroll 2008:721; Edwards 2015:4). Luke was

⁹⁵ Luke has been compared to Polybius, a great historian of his day, since he employed the same approach (Gruyter 2016:152-3; cf. Campbell 2007:31-2).

⁹⁶ Powell (2009:151) also notes how the Gospel of Luke resembles the works of Greco-Roman writers like Virgil and Homer.

⁹⁷ The style of Luke's Greek is accepted to be of the best in the New Testament. Though there is some evidence of a possible Semitic background to his material, the Gospel of Luke is not a mere cut-and-paste copy of previous works. It is instead a well-integrated treatise written by someone who was well educated in that the author rewrote any information he gathered either in his own style or words (Dayton 2009:1126). This is confirmed by the author in Luke 1:1-4, where he reports how others have taken on the task of writing an account of all that has been

clearly a gifted writer as his composition is filled with short, sharply defined essays (Johnson 1997:3). This is already evident in the preface, which introduces the subject and aims of the work and reveals the author's credentials for his literary project (Carroll 2008:721). The writings of Luke also point to an author who is well informed on various topics, whether as a Jew or more likely as a gentile drawn to the Jewish religion and practices by the Scripture of early Judaism.⁹⁸

The writer of the Gospel of Luke does not claim to be an eyewitness of what he wrote down and described.⁹⁹ Rather, he clearly states that the things he recorded, were delivered to him, and to his contemporaries, by people who he claims saw all that transpired and who he describes as “servants of the Word”¹⁰⁰ (NIV) (Dayton 2009:1126). While the writer of Luke-Acts was not part of the group of disciples who were with Jesus during his earthly ministry, he insists that the information he gathered came from persons who had themselves seen what had taken place from the beginning (Dayton 2009:1126; Geldenhuys 1977:15).

fulfilled among the people and, in view of this, he has also carefully done his own investigation and deemed it fit to write an orderly account.

⁹⁸ The writer expresses himself in the idioms and content of the historical narratives of the Old Testament. Examples of these are the story of the childless couple, Zachariah and Elizabeth (1:5-25), which replicates the experience of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 16:18-21; and the song of Mary in Luke 1:46-55, which echoes Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 1 and 2 (Carroll 2008:721). One can thus accept that the author had some knowledge of a wide range of Old Testament literature including the law, historical narratives, and prophetic texts. He describes them as belonging to a three-part corpus of texts: the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms (Lk 24:44).

⁹⁹ While this may not authenticate Luke's precision, the fact that the author differentiates himself from the eyewitnesses cannot be overlooked. It is thus possible that Luke was concerned with giving a truthful report of the testimonies of eyewitnesses he received, as this was the purpose of his investigation (Berker and Kohlenberger 1994:207).

¹⁰⁰ Luke does not mention his witnesses by name and therefore any attempt to identify them is pure speculation. Luke may, for example, have interviewed persons related to the family of Jesus. Reports may furthermore have reached him directly from eyewitnesses, possibly during his stay in Palestine, or at the time when Paul was in prison. His knowledge of and association with some of the apostles and other leaders of the early church is also suggested by how he wrote his story. Irenaeus' claim that Luke recorded the good news preached by Paul (Dayton 2009:1126), however, seems unlikely when Acts' version of Paul is compared with Paul's letters.

Luke's prefaces in Luke 1:3 and Acts 1:1 indicate that Theophilus¹⁰¹ was the primary recipient of his two works. Theophilus was probably a high-ranking Greek person as Luke 1:3 refers to Theophilus as "most excellent" (κράτιστε) Theophilus. The title was common among Jews and the gentile nations¹⁰² (Dayton 2009:1130) and is an example of honorific language which evokes the language of patronage.¹⁰³ Theophilus may have been a benefactor who supported the community of which Luke was part (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992:283) and the publication of Luke's work (Dayton 2009:1130). Theophilus may have been someone who, although he had the privilege of hearing and accepting the Gospel and was convinced of its claim, still had questions about Christianity. In view of this, one may argue that Luke wrote to him to strengthen him in his belief and encourage him to continue as a patron in the community. Looking at the contents of the book of Acts, it seems Theophilus was possibly uncertain about the activities of the Holy Spirit, the ministry of the apostles and the expansion of Christianity in the Roman Empire (Barker and Kohlenberger 1994:206). So, the simple answer regarding the occasion of Luke-Acts could be found in the prologue of the two books: that he wanted to reassure his patron. Luke linked the message about Jesus with an eyewitness account (Lk 1:1-4; Acts 10:39) and proof from prophecy (Acts 10:43), to strengthen the faith of Theophilus (Barker and Kohlenberger 1994:206-7).

According to Edwards (2015:23), the preface of Luke provides the most important testimony to the prehistory of the gospels in the 1st century in that it gives important first-hand information about Luke's approach as an author and evangelist (Lk 1:1-4). There is consensus among the majority of scholars that the writer of Luke had two other main literary sources, Mark¹⁰⁴ and "Q"¹⁰⁵, and another source labelled "L", which is unique to him. Luke refers to earlier

¹⁰¹ The name Theophilus simply means "Friend of God"; it was either a nickname or his real name (Larson 1983:22; Dayton 2009:1130).

¹⁰² The same address he ascribes to governors like Felix and Festus (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25).

¹⁰³ According to Malina and Rohrbaugh (1992:283), the honorific language used here speaks the language of patronage and suggests that Luke wrote to his benefactor, who was his social superior.

¹⁰⁴ It has been suggested that the version of Mark used by Luke was not the canonical Mark we have today, but an early form of material known as Ur-Marcus (Dayton 2009:1126). This theory has, however, not gained broad acceptance since there is no textual evidence for it.

¹⁰⁵ The theoretical document referred to as "Q" has been designated as sayings of Jesus that follow the pattern of wisdom literature. Some also refer to it as the logia that Papias accredited

attempts¹⁰⁶ to narrate the story he was about to narrate (διήγησιν) and emphasises that he was connecting the events in a sequential manner (καθεξῆς). The use of the phrase “in order” suggests how important a correct and orderly narration was for Luke (Acts 9:27; 11:4; 15:12-14) (Green 1997:1). Luke seemed to view the attempts others had made to give an account of what had taken place, as inadequate and therefore felt compelled to write his own version. Possibly he felt a better version was needed to relate to the more cultured groups of his society.

According to Bovon (2006:11), for Luke, everything began with history, and he attempted to record Jesus’ story from his birth to his ascension in a logical manner. This implies that Luke not only collected what others had recorded and passed it on to his audience, but that he carefully investigated every bit of information he collected to ascertain how reliable the information was before passing it on to his readers. Like all writers, the author of Luke-Acts had a message that he wanted to share with his recipients (Blaiklock 2009:51).

One clear purpose that one can discern from the prologue of Luke (Lk 1:1-4), is that of evangelism, since the themes of the theology of salvation and the pronouncement of good news are central to both Luke and Acts. His all-encompassing message of salvation speaks of God’s action to include all people, irrespective of their status or background, in his kingdom. The salvific action of God through the person of Jesus, who came and made God’s rule known to all people so that they could accept and align themselves with God’s saving agenda for humanity, needed to be shared broadly (Green 2013:546). In Luke 4:18-19 this proclamation of God’s salvation is especially extended to the poor, the prisoners, the blind and the oppressed. For Luke the message of salvation by Luke was for all.¹⁰⁷

The book of Acts recorded the next phase of the new movement, with Christ’s power operating in the lives of his disciples (Blaikklock 2009:53). In Acts 6:7 it is recorded how the number of

to Matthew. It is usually seen as consisting of the double tradition comprised of the material found in both Matthew and Luke, but not in Mark (Dayton 2009:1126).

¹⁰⁶ The prologue implies that the author of Luke wrote a new book alongside an existing work in that he had a source on which he was relying for information while writing his work (Marshall 1978:39). It is also possible that Luke was not satisfied with what was already in circulation and therefore felt compelled to rewrite what had been written.

¹⁰⁷ Etukumana (2016:161) also notes how the Lukan references to the Old Testament (cf. Lk 4:25-27; 24:56; Acts 1:8; 2:39; 10:34; 15:14; 26:17; 28:26) support the proclamation to the gentiles.

disciples of Jesus increased, with even a large number of priests accepting the faith. In Acts 6:8 reference is made to the great commission that states how the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria, enjoyed peace. The next section starts with Peter's incursion in Acts 10, and continues to Acts 12:24, providing a picture of how the Word continued to spread. From Acts 12:25 to 16:5 an account is given of the gentile mission of Paul and his co-workers. It ends with a statement of how the churches were encouraged in their faith and grew daily in numbers. Acts 16:6 to 19:20 traces the further progress of Paul's mission work, which climaxes in Ephesus, indicating that the Word was spreading widely and growing in power. The final section takes the work to a conclusion with the scene shifting from Jerusalem to Rome.

The outline above provides an indication of the author's purpose in attempting to give a historical account of what transpired. The same can be said of Luke's attempt to describe Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection in his gospel (Dayton 2009:1137). Luke claims to have provided his audience not only with an orderly account, but also with a reliable account of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Lk 1:1-4).

Another purpose of the author that is interwoven with the historical one as treated above, is the universality of the Gospel (Berker and Kohlenberger 1994:207). He, for example, narrates how Paul's missionary activities progressed from Antioch and Jerusalem to Rome. He records how Philip, one of the deacons (Acts 6:1-7), went to the Samaritans and gained the attention and acceptance of the church there (Acts 8:4-8). Stephen in the end suffered and died for the proclamation of the Gospel to all (Acts 7:1ff). It was, according to Luke, Peter, and not Paul, who persuaded the church to accept the gentile world (Acts 10). Luke also stresses the gentile membership of the church at Antioch, where the followers of Jesus were first called Christians (Acts 11:26), and where Luke possibly became a follower of Christ (Blaiklock 2009:52). According to Dayton (2009:1137), in view of the strong emphasis on the gentile mission in Luke, it is clear that Luke connected his two volumes with gentile history throughout and was thus the first historian in the Bible who wrote with a broader audience in mind than Israel. He also did not write with a myopic goal in mind, like belittling the immediate disciples of Jesus (the twelve) to promote Paul, or to simply praise Paul, or to settle the dispute between the Judaizers and Paul and his disciples. Instead, his work was intended to confirm to his readers that salvation is to be found in Christ (Dayton 2009:1137).

Another possible purpose for Luke's writing is that he was in some way involved in "apologetics". According to Blaiklock (2009:58), Luke, for example, often refers to occasions when competent authorities misunderstood the church's action, or others made an allegation against it, providing him with the opportunity to clear it from all accusations of being involved in treachery, malice, or subversion. According to Luke, neither Pilate nor Herod Antipas found any truth in the charges brought against Jesus, and a Roman centurion paid tribute to Jesus on his death. In Acts, Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Cyprus, is depicted as being convinced of the claims of Christianity. In Philippi, the magistrates panicked when they realised they had unlawfully beaten and confined a Roman citizen (Acts 16:35-39) (Blaiklock 2009:58). In Corinth, Gallio avoided the case against one whom a Roman court had no jurisdiction to judge (Acts 18:12-16). Claudius Lysias, in his letter to Governor Felix in Caesarea, was respectful and passed no judgement against Paul (Acts 23:23-30). Festus himself saw no cause for punishment in the case as it was presented to him (Acts 25:24-27). This is later confirmed by Agrippa II himself (Acts 25:29-32).

From the above discussion, one can infer that Luke was concerned with defending Christianity as a religion in the Roman Empire. He made it known to the Roman authorities that Paul had certain legal rights in the Roman Empire, and as such Christianity should also enjoy the same rights as the other groups of Judaism. For example, Paul himself, while standing trial, tried to align himself with Judaism, especially with Pharisaism and referred to Christianity as a sect. Ironically, the same term was later used against him (Acts 24:5, 14) (Barker and Kohlenberger 1994:206-7). From the evidence presented above, it appears that Luke had the defence of the new Christianity movement in mind for a wider audience when he wrote his two works.

It is clear that Luke did not intend to write a history of the synagogue. As a reliable historian (as he presents himself), he can, however, provide accurate information about the ministries of Jesus and Paul in various synagogues. The possibility, however, remains that his descriptions of their ministries could have been his own creation to serve his theological aims. Without adequate independent information it is impossible to definitively know which is more likely.

4.4 The unity and composition of Luke-Acts

In terms of the research focus of this study on the synagogues as a locus for ministry in Luke-Acts in general, and Luke 4:16-30 in particular, it is important to determine if these two books (Luke and Acts) should be treated together in a separate chapter (Chapter Five) and not simply as different books in the New Testament (Chapter Four). For this reason, the unity of Luke-Acts will be investigated in the following section (4.4.1) and, if established, the literary composition of Luke-Acts will be analysed (4.4.2).

4.4.1 The unity of Luke-Acts

According to Green (2013:541), Luke and Acts are generally accepted by scholars to have been written by the same author making Luke the largest contributor to the New Testament.¹⁰⁸ While there are some dissenting voices who argue for separate authorship of the two volumes, the evidence for it being the work of a single author is decisive for most scholars (Polhill 1992:23).

The prefaces to the two books, Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2, both suggest that the book of Acts is somehow a continuation of the Gospel of Luke (Green 2013:541).¹⁰⁹ In the prologue of the book of Acts, the author states: “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach” (Acts 1:1 NIV),¹¹⁰ implying that Acts is the second of at least two works by him. The two books may, however, have been completed and presented separately to its initial readers (Rowe 2005:132; 2007:450).¹¹¹ If this is the case, Luke and Acts were not

¹⁰⁸ Acts 1:1 reads like a summary of the material in Luke and begins geographically in Jerusalem where the Gospel of Luke ended (Lk 24:52-53; Acts 1:9-10) (Stein 1992:21-2). The Gospel of Luke also seems to have been written with Acts in mind (Lk 1:1-4; Acts 1:1), suggesting that without the Acts of the Apostles, the aim of the gospel would not have been achieved or completed. Acts should thus be understood as being written with the aim to complement or complete what the gospel had begun.

¹⁰⁹ Green (2013:541) further states that arguments against a common author have typically taken the form of a stylistic analysis which fails to meet the requirements of a sound analysis.

¹¹⁰ See Luke 1:3.

¹¹¹ While it appears likely that Luke-Acts should be read as a literary unit, there is no evidence that Luke and Acts were heard and read as one book by the early Christians in the 1st century (Rowe 2005:132; 2007:450). It is important to note that Rowe does not in any way reject the

initially read as a single literary work telling a unified story. This is also often the case with contemporary readers today largely due to the canonical placement of the two books in the New Testament (Green 1997:6). In the 2nd century the first book of Luke was placed with the other three gospels in order to form the fourfold gospel. Acts was seen as a bridge between the story of Jesus and the ministry of Paul and was thus placed after the Gospel of John and before the letters of Paul. Its canonical position provides a framework for understanding the Pauline letters (Green 1997:6-7).

There is, however, good reason to focus on the two books as a co-joined work. Not only does Luke-Acts maintain a continuous pattern that is unique to them as both share a common interest and a common style of writing (Kim 1998:36; McCain 2011:137), they, according to Kohlenberger and Barker (1994:204), have common artistic and organisational features which point to a single author. This is supported by the several themes they share which have a distinctive emphasis not found elsewhere in the New Testament.

As part of a two-volume book by a single author, Acts can be understood as a continuation of Luke and as such the two books should be treated together. In Luke and Acts combined more information is provided on the apostles and leaders of the early church than in any other book of the New Testament. There is thus good reason to focus on Luke-Acts to understand the role of synagogues as locales for the ministry of Jesus and the early church.¹¹²

4.4.2 The literary composition of Luke-Acts

Structurally, the Gospel of Luke is determined by its biographical outlook.¹¹³ The gospel account of Luke starts with the stories of the conception of John and Jesus, their births, and the

treatment of the two books as a literary unit, however, he warns against viewing them as having been received and read at the same time.

¹¹² The works of Luke comprise 28 percent of the New Testament books as a whole (Dayton 2009:1126; Green 2013:541).

¹¹³ It can also be structured geographically. Geographically, Luke begins his gospel account in Nazareth (1:26-38). However, after the account of Jesus' birth, Luke shifts his attention to Jesus with a focus on the Temple. According to Luke, John's ministry was located around the region of Judah (Lk 3:3), while he depicts Jesus as staying in the wilderness to be tempted (4:1-13),

situations that surrounded their calls to the public ministry. After the preface, both John and Jesus are clearly validated as representing the fulfilment of God's promises (Lk 1:17). However, while John is said to be like Elijah, Jesus is understood to have a Davidic role and has a divine origin (Lk 1:13-35). According to Culpepper (2005:77), the events that surrounded the birth of Jesus, speak of Jesus' future divine greatness. John in Luke is the preparer of the way (Jesus), Jesus is the fulfilment. In the Luke account, Jesus is presented as superior to John (Lk 1-2) (Bock 2004:758).

The calling of Jesus in Luke is followed by Jesus' earthly ministry. In his ministry Jesus' teaching, especially in the synagogue at Nazareth, focusses on the aim of Jesus, which is aligned with the notion that Jesus saw himself as the fulfilment of God's promises (Lk 4:16-30). This is followed by the Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6:17-49). While Jesus' teaching in the synagogue gives a clear picture of his understanding of his ministry, the Sermon on the Plain presents his fundamental ethics (Ringe 2002:67; Bock 2004:758). The Gospel of Luke culminates with Jesus' arrest, followed by his trials, sentencing, and execution.

The ascension of Jesus functions as a link between Luke's gospel and Acts, his second volume (Ringe 2002:66). The book of Acts, according to Parsons (2008:17), can be divided in two: the first section covers the mission of the Jerusalem church in chapters 1-12 with the immediate disciples of Jesus as the major key players; the second section is about the mission of Paul the apostle in chapters 13-28. The first part centres on the people and places of Jerusalem, while the second describes the missionary activities of Paul and his companions (Parsons 2008:17). In the first section, chapters 1-5 cover the activities of the early church in Jerusalem and chapters 6-13 give a picture of the outreach beyond Jerusalem. The missionary activities of Paul (Acts 13:1-21:16) give an account of the three major missions of Paul, with Acts 21:27-

an event that follows the beginning of his ministry in his hometown, Nazareth (4:16-30). In Luke 9:51, Luke presents Jesus as one who embarks on a long journey to Jerusalem, a journey that starts in Luke 9:51 and ends in 19:28. This section is named "a travel narrative" and is a full third of Luke's first volume (the gospel) (Holladay 2005:163). This section also includes Jesus' teachings and miraculous works. According to Peterson (2009:10), in Luke's second volume (Acts), the geographical movement from one region to the other as stated in Acts 1:8, has both cultural and theological significance. The geographical development is broadly linked to the sequential development of the re-counting of Luke's story, which selectively records the ministry of the apostles and other early Christian leaders. Luke's theological plan also influenced the way the story was created and presented.

28:31 relating Paul's defence of his ministry. This division also highlights the geographical aspect of Acts as the narrative sequel of Luke moves from Jerusalem (Acts 1-7) to Rome (Acts 28:16-31) and emphasises a core foundational narrative of a world mission that embraces the activity of Luke's audience (Carroll 2012:15). This discussion also supports the claim that the author of Luke was a historian, a geographer and at the same time a theologian, who was conscious of time and place and the significance of what he passed on to his audience.

The following brief outline of Luke and Acts presents a picture of where the passages on the synagogue fit into their narrative. It is based on the outlines of Culpepper (2005:77) and Holladay (2005:161-4).

| The Gospel of Luke | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Luke 1:1-4 | The prologue |
| Luke 1:5-2:52 | The infancy narrative |
| Luke 3:1-4:13 | Preparation for the ministry of Jesus |
| Luke 4:14-9:50 | The ministry in Galilee |
| Luke 9:51-19:27 | The travel narrative: Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem |
| Luke 19:28-21:38 | The ministry in Jerusalem |
| Luke 22:1-24:53 | The passion and resurrection narratives |

| Acts | |
|-------------|---|
| Acts 1-7 | The beginning in Jerusalem |
| Acts 8-12 | Beyond Jerusalem: Philip, Saul, Peter, and others |

| | |
|------------|-------------------------------------|
| Acts 13-19 | Paul's mission to the gentile world |
| Acts 20-28 | Paul's farewell journey |

From the outline above, it is evident that the major focus text of this research (Luke 4:16-30) falls under “the ministry in Galilee”, the second major section of Luke in the outline above. It occurs within a narrative sequence of Jesus’ ministries in Galilee, which is part of a larger block of Luke (Lk 4:14-9:50) and has also been identified as Jesus’ stopover on his journey to Jerusalem, the eternal city (Manus 2009:39).

The outline, which suggests the synagogue as the starting point of Jesus’ public ministry, shows how strategic the synagogue as an institution was in the ministry of the Lukan Jesus. The pattern of starting a ministry in a Jewish institution can also be seen in the activities of Paul and Barnabas, who often began their ministry in a town or city in the synagogue. Commissioned by the Holy Spirit to spread the Gospel, they went to Seleucia before travelling to Cyprus by ship. When Paul and Barnabas arrived at Salamis, they first preached the Gospel in the Jewish synagogues with John Mark as their assistant (Acts 13:4-5). This passage, the first event of Paul’s ministry in the gentile world after his commission, emphasises the fact that the synagogue was a strategic place for the ministry of Jesus and his later followers. In addition to this, it highlights the parallels between Jesus and Paul. The book of Acts also recorded other instances where Paul on his arrival in a place first went to the synagogue to preach, thereby strengthening the impression of how significant and widespread the synagogue was in Palestine and the Diaspora.

4.5 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to provide a description of the socio-historical context of Luke-Acts. The study has shown that Luke-Acts was written by an author who was not an eyewitness of the events he chronicled in the gospel but that he participated in some of the events he recorded in Acts. Luke-Acts presents itself as having been written to Theophilus, who may

have been a patron of Luke who sponsored his work. However, as indicated in Acts 1:8, Luke also appears to have had a broader audience in mind.

Luke-Acts reflects that Luke was a theologian, a historian, and a geographer. He interpreted his theological themes from a historical point of view. Geographically, in his gospel Luke covered events from Jerusalem to Galilee and back to Jerusalem again. In Acts he presented the disciples of Jesus starting their ministry in Palestine and ending in Rome. He was apparently interested in providing an orderly account of the proclamation of the Gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

In terms of the structure of this study, this chapter has indicated that Luke and Acts belong together and may thus be studied together as a distinct literary and theological collection of writings in the New Testament. Furthermore, it revealed that Luke's focus on the history of the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus is reflected in his critical engagement with his sources. It is probable that he provides accurate information on the synagogues in the 1st century. This chapter, however, also showed that Luke had a theological aim and therefore it can also be assumed that his depictions of Jesus' and Paul's engagements with different synagogues were shaped by his theology. In terms of Luke's theology, it is clear that he had a specific interest in the poor and downtrodden of his time. It is to be expected that this theme will also be evident in his engagement with different synagogues.

Chapter Five – *The synagogue in Luke-Acts*

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will first give an overview of the synagogue and its role in Luke-Acts (5.2). The focus will then shift to Luke 4:16-30 which is an important text for understanding Luke's view of Jesus' message, mission and strategy (5.3-8). After the analysis of Luke 4:1-30, Luke's description of Paul's engagement with the synagogue (5.9), and the role of the synagogue and the household in the spread of the ἐκκλησία in Luke-Acts (5.10) will be discussed. This chapter will use what Theissen (1977:3) classifies as a constructive approach, in that it will attempt to unveil the social location of Luke-Acts (5.6). It will conclude (5.13) by using a comparative approach to compare Luke-Acts' description of the synagogue with what is known of the synagogue from ancient sources (cf. Chapter Two) alongside an analytical approach (5.11).

5.2 Overview of Luke's reference to the synagogue in Luke-Acts

As discussed in Chapter Three (3.1.1), of the 56 occurrences of συναγωγή in the New Testament, 35 are in Luke-Acts¹¹⁴ (Frankemolle 1993:293). Luke thus has the widest variety of synagogue material of the synoptic gospels (Schwartzwan 1953:119). Of the 35 occurrences of the term συναγωγή in Luke-Acts, 15 are in the gospel and 20 in Acts (Frankemolle 1983:293).¹¹⁵ Luke develops the understanding of the synagogue in Mark in both his gospel and Acts by adding his own material on the nature and function of the synagogue. In terms of synagogue accessories, the Gospel of Luke refers to the πρωτοκαθεδρίαν in 11:43 and 20:46. Personnel of the synagogue mentioned in Luke's gospel include the ruler of a synagogue (found in 8:41, 8:49, and 13:14, 23) and the synagogue attendant, the ὑπηρέτης, is mentioned in 4:20 (Schwartzwan 1953:119). The Capernaum synagogue, which was perhaps built by a non-Jew (Lk 7:1-5) (Charlsworth 2006:19), is described as a location for the reading of Scripture and

¹¹⁴ Acts 6:9; 9:20; 13:5, 14 (two times), 42; 14:1; 15:21; 17:1, 2, 10, 17; 18:4, 7, 8, 16, 19, 26; 19:8; 22:19; 24:12; 26:11.

¹¹⁵ Luke 12:11 (ἐπὶ ταῖς συναγωγαῖς), however, does not refer to the institution but to judicial assemblies or tribunals.

prayer. It has in its possession a Book of Isaiah for which an attendant is responsible (Lk 4:16-19) (Schwartzman 1953:119). It is clear from these initial remarks that Luke's writings are a good source of information on the synagogue in the 1st century. The manner in which he provides information on the synagogues of Judea (Lk 4:33; 6:6; 13:10) and of Jesus' contacts with persons associating with the synagogue (Lk 7:5; 8:41), strengthens the impression that Luke prioritises the synagogue in his writings.

In Luke 7:1-10 a centurion is presented as a benefactor¹¹⁶ who loved the Jews and built a synagogue for them. In return they praised him before Jesus and recommended that Jesus help him. Jesus became his benefactor and therefore he praised Jesus after Jesus healed his servant. This is affirmed by the centurion's words in Luke 7:6: "I am not worthy to have you come under my roof." This implies that the centurion acknowledged the superiority of Jesus and placed his faith in him as a patron (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992:326). Since the early church emerged within the milieu of patron-client relationships, it could not escape its impact (Simmons 2008:289). Characters like Lydia (Acts 16:14), John Mark's mother (Acts 12:12), and Chloe (1 Cor 1:11), who were instrumental in the establishment of churches in the 1st century, can therefore all be understood as patrons.

Luke in his gospel adds additional material on the synagogue to what he takes over from Mark, in that he also describes the following actions of Jesus in the synagogue: (1) Acts of teaching by Jesus are mentioned in 4:15, 4:31-32, 6:6 and 13:14. (2) According to 4:44, Jesus also participated in preaching in the synagogue. (3) Acts of healing are performed by Jesus in 4:33-36, 6:6-10 and 13:11-13. (4) Jesus' reading from the book of Isaiah is described in 4:16-20. (5) The idea of punishment in the synagogue is reflected in the use of παραδιδόντες εἰς τὰς συναγωγὰς in 21:12; 24.

¹¹⁶ Benefaction played an important role in the context in which the text of Luke-Acts was composed (Horsley 1996:135). The well-to-do who were financially advantaged and had the honour of holding a municipal office, were expected to contribute from their riches for the wellbeing of the community (Stambaugh and Balch 1986:75; Silas 2016:37). The community, on the other hand, was also obliged to show their gratitude in return for what they received. These acts of appreciation came in various forms: erecting statues or giving the person honorary citizenship, a golden crown, the seat of honour at the theatre, free meals in the town, immunity from taxation, or by showing appreciation and praising the benefactor for acts of generosity. This kind of relationship was respected in the 1st century and is evident in the New Testament (Stambaugh and Balch 1986:75; Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992:402).

As identified in 1.1 and in the description of the unique Lukan material in the previous paragraph, the key pericope for understanding the role of the synagogue as locale for ministry in Luke, is Luke 4:16-30. It is key because it provides the most information about what Jesus did when he visited a synagogue.

5.3 Jesus' inaugural sermon in the public synagogue in Nazareth

In Luke 2:22-52, 19:28ff and Acts 1:12-8:1, Jesus and his early disciples focussed primarily on the Temple and Jerusalem. But as was Jesus' custom in the Galilean period, Luke tells us that Jesus first went to the synagogue on the Sabbath (Lk 4:16)¹¹⁷, which is corroborated later in Acts 17:2. Jesus' inaugural sermon in the synagogue in Nazareth in Luke 4:16-30 introduces major theological and missional themes¹¹⁸ in Luke-Acts.¹¹⁹ It is, however, a question if the only function of this programmatic appearance of Jesus in a synagogue is to provide a convenient summary of Jesus' teaching, or if it also provides a key for understanding the intent of his mission and ministry and how he intended to achieve these goals. According to Isaak (2006:1231), Jesus' preaching of the good news to the poor, proclamation of freedom for prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, release of the oppressed, and ushering in of the year of God's favour (4:18-19), sets the agenda for his ministry. It is, furthermore, made in a public synagogue. Moon and Punt (2013:5) also understand Jesus' speech in the synagogue of Nazareth as a public one in terms of Hellenistic conventions. According to them, it was the intent of Jesus to confront the entire house of Israel by addressing those present in the synagogue of Nazareth as their representatives.

There are a number of reasons for accepting that the synagogue in Nazareth was a public one (see 2.2.4).

¹¹⁷ It should be noted that the ordering of the events of Jesus' life is Luke's literary construct.

¹¹⁸ The rejection of Jesus at Nazareth over "the gentile question", for example, prepares the stage for Paul's rejection over the same issue in Acts (Edwards 2015:133).

¹¹⁹ Acts 13:46 indicates that the Gospel was to be proclaimed first to the Jews; but since they rejected the Gospel, it was instead proclaimed to the gentiles (Acts 3:26). On the basis of this shift, which is narratively developed in Luke-Acts (Frankemolle 1983:295; Edwards 2015:132), the sermon presented by Jesus in Luke 4:16-30 effectively announces the gentile mission, and not the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10), as is often thought.

First, the fact that Jesus, who belonged to no Jewish party or association, was invited to read the Torah and deliver a message, implies that this synagogue was a public one, and not an association synagogue belonging to a particular party. In an association synagogue, only those belonging to the association the synagogue was aligned to, were allowed to undertake the reading of Scripture.

Second, the size and nature of Nazareth (5.6.1) makes it unlikely, but not impossible, that there was more than one synagogue in the village.

Third, Luke does not need to specify which synagogue Jesus attended. He simply states that Jesus went to the synagogue he usually attended (Καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς Ναζαρά, οὗ ἦν τεθραμμένος, καὶ εἰσῆλθεν κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς αὐτῷ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν καὶ ἀνέστη ἀναγνῶναι – Luke 4:16). Luke also does not mention that Jesus' family belonged to any Jewish party, so they would not have attended an association synagogue with Jesus when he grew up in Nazareth.

Fourth, Luke presents Jesus' hometown as unified in their rejection of him and his message, which aligns with the fact that public synagogues could make decisions on behalf of the whole community.

Fifth, Luke does not mention the Pharisees and the Sadducees in the synagogue; a point that supports what we know of the Second Temple period (2.2.4).

Jesus was not just addressing a specific grouping in his society in their association synagogue, but rather his entire community, of which representatives would have been present in their public synagogue.

5.4 Translation of Luke 4:16-30

In trying to give an overview of the text in question, it is important to begin with a translation of the text.

Luke 4:16-30

| Greek text | English translation ¹²⁰ |
|--|--|
| 16 Καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς Ναζαρά, οὗ ἦν τεθραμμένος, καὶ εἰσῆλθεν κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς αὐτῷ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν, καὶ ἀνέστη ἀναγνῶναι. | And he came to Nazareth where he had been nourished and according to his custom, he went into the synagogue on the day of the Sabbath and he rose up to read. |
| 17 καὶ ἐπεδόθη αὐτῷ βιβλίον τοῦ προφήτου Ἡσαΐου καὶ ἀναπτύξας τὸ βιβλίον εὗρεν τὸν τόπον οὗ ἦν γεγραμμένον· | And the scroll of the prophet Elijah was given to him and when he unrolled it, he found the place where it was written: |
| 18 Πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ’ ἐμέ, οὗ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς, ἀπέσταλκέν με κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν, ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει, | The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good tidings to the poor, he has sent me out to proclaim forgiveness to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free, |
| 19 κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν. | to proclaim the favourable year of the Lord. |
| 20 καὶ πτύξας τὸ βιβλίον ἀποδοὺς τῷ ὑπηρέτῃ ἐκάθισεν· καὶ πάντων οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ ἦσαν ἀτενίζοντες αὐτῷ. | And he rolled up the scroll, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And all who were in the synagogue stared at him. |
| 21 ἤρξατο δὲ λέγειν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ὅτι Σήμερον πεπλήρωται ἡ γραφὴ αὕτη ἐν τοῖς ὠσὶν ὑμῶν. | And he began to say to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilling in your hearing.” |
| 22 καὶ πάντες ἐμαρτύρουν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐθαύμαζον ἐπὶ τοῖς λόγοις τῆς χάριτος τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔλεγον· Οὐχὶ υἱὸς ἐστὶν Ἰωσήφ οὗτος; | All testified well of him and marvelled at the gracious message that came out of his mouth. And they said, Is this not Joseph’s Son? |

¹²⁰ The translation is my own, unless indicated otherwise.

| | |
|---|--|
| 23 καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς· Πάντως ἐρεῖτέ μοι τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην· Ἰατρέ, θεράπευσον σεαυτόν· ὅσα ἠκούσαμεν γινόμενα εἰς τὴν Καφαρναοὺμ ποίησον καὶ ὧδε ἐν τῇ πατρίδι σου. | And he said to them, “Certainly you will say this to me: ‘Physician, cure yourself’. Do also here in your hometown what we heard that you did in Capernaum.” |
| 24 εἶπεν δέ· Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐδεὶς προφήτης δεκτός ἐστιν ἐν τῇ πατρίδι αὐτοῦ. | And he said to them, “Verily I say to you, that no prophet is favoured in his hometown. |
| 25 ἐπ’ ἀληθείας δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, πολλαὶ αἱ χῆραι ἦσαν ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ, ὅτε ἐκλείσθη ὁ οὐρανὸς ἐπὶ ἔτη τρία καὶ μῆνας ἕξ, ὡς ἐγένετο λιμὸς μέγας ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν, | “Also, I tell you the truth, in the days of Elijah there were many widows in Israel, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine took place all over the land. |
| 26 καὶ πρὸς οὐδεμίαν αὐτῶν ἐπέμφθη Ἰησοῦς εἰ μὴ εἰς Σάρεπτα τῆς Σιδωνίας πρὸς γυναῖκα χήραν | “Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to Zarephath, a city of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. |
| 27 καὶ πολλοὶ οἱ λεπροὶ ἦσαν ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ ἐπὶ Ἐλισαίου τοῦ προφήτου, καὶ οὐδεὶς αὐτῶν ἐκαθαρίσθη, εἰ μὴ Ναυμὰν ὁ Σύρος. | “And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Prophet Elisha, but none of them was healed, if not Naaman from Syria.” |
| 28 καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν πάντες θυμοῦ ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ ἀκούοντες ταῦτα, | And when they heard this, all of them in the synagogue were filled with anger. |
| 29 καὶ ἀναστάντες ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως, καὶ ἤγαγον αὐτὸν ἕως ὁφρύος τοῦ ὄρους ἐφ’ οὗ ἡ πόλις ὠκοδόμητο αὐτῶν, ὥστε κατακρημνίσαι αὐτόν· | They rose up and expelled him out of the city and brought him as far as the edge of the hill upon which the city was built to throw him down. |
| 30 αὐτὸς δὲ διελθὼν διὰ μέσου αὐτῶν ἐπορεύετο. | But he passed away through them. |

According to Kimball (1994:9), Luke 4:16-30 preserves the only New Testament quotation of Isaiah 61:1-2 (linked with Isa 58:6). The Isaiah 61 quotation and the sermon are likely the most central passage in Luke and is generally considered programmatic for both Luke and Acts in that the message embedded in the passage is the first narrative episode of Jesus' ministry in public as recorded by Luke (Green 1997:2070). While Luke states how Jesus conducted himself in the synagogue in other passages (Lk 4:15, 41; 4:31-37; 6:6; 13:10-17), he, however, omits the content of Jesus' teaching. Luke 4:16-30 is the only passage that provides the content of Jesus' teaching in a synagogue.

The text occurs within a narrative describing Jesus' ministry in Galilee that is part of a larger block (Geldenhuis 1977:166; 1994:4). Scholars demarcate this larger block, Luke 4:14-9:50, in different ways.¹²¹ Nolland (1989:184), who subdivides chapter 4 into four sections and titles, states that the section (vv. 14-44 "Preaching in the synagogues of the Jews") announces Jesus' public ministry with an emphasis on teaching in the synagogues. The text is understood to be programmatic and a fitting introduction to Jesus' public ministry according to Luke (Gooding 2013:80). In this passage Jesus is portrayed as a compelling traveller whose ministry could not be halted by those who opposed him in the synagogue at Nazareth (vv. 29-30), or by the people at Capernaum who tried to claim exclusive ownership of him (vv. 42-43). In both places, the actions of Jesus are presented as demonstrating the ministry which Jesus started in Galilee (v. 14) and extended all over Palestine (v. 44). There is also a suggestion that Luke's recounting of Jesus' ministry, starting with the visit to Nazareth, relates to the whole framework of his gospel in that Luke portrays him as one who was set aside to bring salvation not only to the Jews, but also to the gentiles (Geldenhuis 1977:166). Before conducting a socio-historical study of Luke 4:16-30 using Theissen's approach, the study will discuss possible sources of the passage as well as some of the exegetical problems raised by the passage.

¹²¹ Marshall (1978:176-7) and (Carroll 2012:107-17) divide Luke 4 into: "The temptation of Jesus 4:1-13"; "Summary 4:14-15"; "Jesus teaches at Nazareth 4:16-30"; and "Jesus at work in Capernaum 4:32-44". Both authors view the chapter and the text in question as part of Jesus' ministry in Galilee in 4:14-9:50.

5.5 Luke's sources for Luke 4:16-30

The story of Jesus' teaching in the synagogue in Nazareth in Luke 4:16-30 is recorded in a different form to that of Mark 6:2-6 and Matthew 13:54-58 in that Luke provides an expanded story of the basic events and information that cannot be found in Mark 6:2-6 and Matthew 13:54-58. It also occurs in a different place in Luke's narrative. These differences have raised the question if the event described in Luke 4:16-30 is the same as the one described in Matthew and Mark (Plummer 1964:118). According to Nolland (1989:192), there is little doubt that Luke used additional sources for his account of the Jesus' ministry in Nazareth. This view is shared by Plummer (1964:118) and Culpepper (2015:83), who identify different traditions that are brought together in Luke. Luke, for example, records both Jesus' reading from the scroll of Isaiah as well as his teaching afterwards. The preceding summary of Jesus' ministry by Luke in 4:14-15 also states that Jesus was praised in the synagogues of Galilee, which leads the reader to expect further praise for his ministry as the story progresses. But in this story, which serves at least to some extent as an illustration of his ministry, Jesus is rejected.

According to Marshall (1978:177-178), the importance of the contrast with the response to Jesus' earlier ministry in Luke 4:14-15 is emphasised by Luke deliberately bringing the story forward in his narrative. In both Mark 6:1-6 and Matthew 13:53-58, a common story surfaces at a significantly later time. The account is understood to have been placed here by Luke for its programmatic significance and introduces many of the themes that can be found in Luke-Acts. The story embedded in the text emphasises that the ministry of Jesus is the fulfilment of the Old Testament in general and the direct fulfilment of Isaiah 61:1ff. in particular (Marshall 1978:178).

In using Mark 6:2-6 in his composition, Luke combines it with material from tradition (Marshall 1978:179). Bultmann (1972:31, 122, 134), for example, claims that Luke 4:25-27 is a secondary creation derived from the anti-Jewish polemic of the gentile church which Luke places in a scene based on Mark, but offers no proof for his theory. This theory of Bultmann is unlikely, since Luke 4:16-30 describes features of a synagogue gathering understood to have taken place in a Palestinian setting rather than a Jewish association synagogue in the Diaspora (Runesson 2001:219-20). Luke 4:16-30, for example, describes Jesus standing up to read and sitting before teaching. In the second volume of Luke (Acts), when Luke describes Paul speaking in a Diaspora synagogue in Pisidia Antioch, he describes Paul as standing up to teach

(Acts 13:15-16). These differences in Luke's portrayals of Jesus' and Paul's postures when teaching in a synagogue, are noted by Levine (2005:158) and Runesson (2001:219). While Levine simply notes the differences, Runesson considers it as proof of a distinction between synagogue practices in Palestine and the Diaspora.

Regarding the use of Mark by Luke, this study agrees with Nolland (1989:192) that Luke had access to other or additional accounts of Jesus' ministry in Nazareth. The reference to Capernaum in v. 23b is, however, probably a Lukan construction. It is also possible that Luke initially put his Nazareth account in the Markan position before he later transferred it to its current location in his gospel when changing the setting of the synagogue. It also seems doubtful that this section is reliant on a united account in a single source. The difficulty in the supposed arrangement, especially vv. 22-23, 23-24, and 24-27, suggests that different traditions were fused together, instead of the entire account being a free composition (Nolland 1989:192). Both Plummer (1964:119-20) and Nolland (1989:193) agree that the text of Isaiah quoted in vv. 18-19 is from the Septuagint. It, for example, agrees with the LXX in reading κυρίου (Lord) instead of κύριος YHWH (Lord Yahweh) and τυφλοῖς (blind) instead of אסורים (those bound). The wording follows the LXX apart from κηρύξαι (to proclaim) in v. 19 and the infinitive ἀποστεῖλαι (to send) in v. 18 instead of the LXX imperative from ἀποστεῖλλε. The other differences of the text as quoted, are the omission from Isaiah 61:1 of the line "to heal the broken-hearted" and the omission of the continuing words of Isaiah 61:2 "and a day of vengeance".

Another noteworthy problem posed by the text is the fusion of Isaiah 61:1 and 58:6d quoted in v. 18c (ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει). This phrase is seen to be an insertion from Isaiah 58:6d, which came between vv. 1 and 2 of Isaiah, with the omission of the c part of the verse (Stein 1992:155). This fusion has created considerable dissent among scholars, with some considering the insertion into the quotation as coming from Luke's hand, while others see it as coming from the historical Jesus himself (Stein 1992:156). Kimball (1994:104), for example, suggests that Jesus made use of the exegetical method of *gezerah shawa*, which connects two texts based on a common catchword. However, Garland (2011:197) argues that it is unlikely that Jesus stopped to roll the scroll back to Isaiah 58. This, according to Garland, is specifically illegal in the Mishna, albeit in later traditions. It is very difficult to identify what Jesus did and what a later editor added. What is clear, is that Isaiah 58:6 was intentionally inserted into the quotation as it includes the word "release" (ἀφέσει), which is a key word in Luke's gospel.

Viewing this as strategic in the Isaianic programme, Afulike (2018:45) says the insertion of Isaiah 58:6 between 61:1 and 2 is a pronouncement that “through the ministry of the anointed servant will the righteousness that is required of the Israelites become a reality”. The act of anointment by the Spirit indicates that the anointed servant will succeed in bringing justice, which the Israelites had failed to do. The omission of Isaiah 61:1c and replacement with Isaiah 58:6 also creates a parallel in the text which is demonstrated by the repetition of the word *ἐλευθέρωση* (Garland 2011:197).

Garland (2011:197) argues that Isaiah 58:5 and 61:2 can be related earlier in Jesus’ ministry as the same word *σήμερον* (today) and *δεκτόν* (acceptable) appear in both passages (Isa 58:5; 61:2). He adds that, while this may not be a verbatim quote of what was read at this synagogue service, the cross-fertilisation of the two texts enriches their meaning. The joining of the passages may have been derived from Jesus’ teaching and, if it was, it was probably central to his homiletic exposition. Garland agrees with Kimball (1994:107) that the insertion of Isaiah 58:1c was a way of enhancing and emphasising the similarity between *ἄφεσιν* and *ἀφέσει*. It can also be seen to authenticate the citation on the lips of Jesus. It defines Jesus’ ministry in terms of Old Testament prophecy and fulfilment in that the quotation of Isaiah 61:1-2 claims that Jesus was the messenger who would accomplish the messianic release of captives.¹²² Vv. 25-27, on the other hand, are generally understood as a pre-Lukan unit reflecting both LXX text influence and Aramaic traditions. The three and a half years of v. 25 almost certainly reflect a tradition in which “three and a half” is symbolic of persecution and distress (Jas 5:7; Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). This symbolism seems to play no role in Luke’s presentation and its use can be attributed to an earlier stage of tradition (Nolland 1989:194). Vv. 28-30 are also suspected of being a free Lukan composition. The language and style appear to be completely Lukan (Nolland 1989:193). According to Marshall (1978:180), the attempt recorded in the text to kill Jesus at some other location, was transferred to Nazareth, since the reference *ἕως ὄφρυος τοῦ ὄρους ἐφ’ οὗ ἡ πόλις ὠκοδόμητο αὐτῶν*, (to the brow of the hill on which their city was built) is difficult to reconcile with Nazareth’s geography. However, some

¹²² According to Afulike (2018:44), Luke 4:16-30 (and vv. 18-19 in particular) is immersed in the message of Isaiah 40-66, which focusses on the promise of Israel’s salvation in terms of social justice. In Isaiah 58 salvation depends on the people’s change in behaviour; saying “no” to injustice and “yes” to justice and righteousness. In chapter 61 the Lord’s servant is the one who is given the role assigned to him in chapter 58.

scholars insist that the absence from ὄψρϋος of the definite article, justifies a translation “to a cliff of the hill on which their city was built”.

From the analysis above it is difficult to determine who made the insertion of 58:6d between Isaiah 61:1 and v. 2. However, the insertion can be understood as a point of emphasis in the message of the Lukan Jesus with the aim of strengthening his message. If the addition is Lukan, it should be viewed as Luke’s way of describing the mission of a suffering servant in order to explain Jesus’ mission more clearly to his readers. In this case, the combination of the two passages is an intentional decision by Luke to portray Jesus as an eschatological prophetic-messianic figure who fulfils the requirements of both Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6.¹²³ While there is no consensus on who was responsible for the insertion, there is agreement that its function is to emphasise and explain Jesus’ ministry. It is also clear from the brief study of Luke’s use of his sources that he knew the contents of Mark, but that he also made use of other sources.

5.6 A socio-historical reading of Luke 4:16-30

In this section a socio-historical reading will be undertaken of Luke 4:16-30. The three methods of analysis suggested by Theissen – constructive, analytical and comparative analysis – will be used with an emphasis on the constructive method.

5.6.1 Luke 4:16-30

Luke 4:16-30 begins with a description of Jesus who comes to Nazareth where he grew up. The phrase οὗ ἦν τεθραμμένος seems to suggest that Jesus had not visited Nazareth for a while. Even though Jesus had not attended the synagogue in Nazareth, the phrase καὶ εἰσῆλθεν κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς (as it was his custom) indicates that he had continued to attend synagogue meetings wherever he was living (Plummer 1964:118). Nolland (1989:295) understands the phrase καὶ εἰσῆλθεν κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς in v. 15 as referring to Jesus’ habit of teaching rather than simply his customary practice of attending a synagogue. While Nolland may be correct, it appears from

¹²³ Stein (1992:156); Onwukeme and Mariusz (2002:80-1), and Afulike (2018) all agree with this.

Luke's account that he wanted to emphasise that Jesus' attending the synagogue in Nazareth was the continuation of his childhood custom (v. 16). It may have been something he copied from his parents, who are described in Luke 2:14 as faithfully observant of the Torah.

In the synagogue Jesus is described as standing up to read. This could imply that he was asked by the leadership of the synagogue to undertake the reading from Isaiah since the ruler of the synagogue (ἀρχισυναγώγων) was in charge of this part of the synagogue service. When Jesus stood up to read, the scroll of Isaiah was handed to him. The text does not state who handed Jesus the scroll, but in view of v. 20 it can be accepted that it was handed to him by the attendant to whom he returned it.¹²⁴ The ruler of the synagogue was responsible for assigning responsibilities in the synagogue and for supervising the worship service (Levine 2005:416). His official duties, as listed by Edwards (2015:134), included caring for the library, organising worship, leading committees, and perhaps being a schoolteacher. However, the ruler of the synagogue did not preach or expound the Torah, meaning the teaching and the exposition on the Sabbath must have been carried out by the laity, as in this case, by Jesus.¹²⁵ By virtue of the ruler's position, one may assume that he was the one who instructed the attendant of the synagogue in Luke 4:17 to hand the scroll to Jesus.¹²⁶

Jesus then unrolled the scroll till he found the place he wanted to read. It was thus Jesus, and not the attendant, who selected which passage he read (Nolland 1989:196). While the law was divided to be read in a three-year cycle (2.7.1), it is not clear if this division determined the

¹²⁴ The attendant (ὀπηρέτης) retrieved the scrolls from their storage cupboard and returned them when the service was over (Plummer 1964:123). Besides preserving the scrolls, he was responsible for the general upkeep of the synagogue. While the position was a paid one, in terms of authority it was beneath that of the ruler of the synagogue (Keener 2014:191). The attendant was also the one in charge of teaching children (Plummer 1964:123).

¹²⁵ Keener (2014:190-1) notes how gentiles remarked on how serious the Jews were about teaching their children their traditions in the synagogue, which earned them the name "a nation of philosophers". As a result of this, their children could recite the Torah from an early age. Handing Jesus the scroll to read suggests that the attendant assumed that Jesus was able to read the Torah as well.

¹²⁶ The synagogue locale provided Jesus with the opportunity to have a copy of the Isaiah text at hand. Its rhetorical impact and the persuasive strength of Jesus' message is evident in the audience's initial reaction in v. 22. However, even though the people recognised the wisdom of Jesus, and even seem to have appreciated it (Lk 4:22), they ultimately rejected it and Jesus (5.6.5).

reading of the law in synagogues in the 1st century. According to Keener (2014:190), in this period the reader was allowed to make their own choice.¹²⁷ The Lukan Jesus attributes his choice of message, and also presumably his choice of text, to the Spirit of the Lord in vv. 18-19. This the only place in Luke in which Jesus is said to have read a text in a synagogue.

After reading from Isaiah in vv. 18-19 the Lukan Jesus rolls up the scroll and gives it back the attendant. After taking his time (ἡρξάτο), Jesus gives his interpretation of the text he read, describing it as good news for the poor (Nolland 1989:198). While the Lukas Jesus claims to have been anointed to bring good news to poor, he does not indicate what this implies other than freedom for prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and release of the oppressed in the year of Lord's favour. According to Garland (2011:195), Nazareth was a village with an estimated population of less than 400 in the time of Jesus. The majority of the population were poor, since archaeological evidence reveal that it had no paved streets, public structures, or fine pottery. The message of Jesus would thus have resonated with his audience as indicated in v. 22. However, their question about Jesus being Joseph's son, according to Nolland (1989:198), can be viewed as an objection to his message or rather an objection to someone of his status pronouncing the year of the Lord's favour.

The response of the Lukan Jesus in v. 23, and his subsequent explanation in vv. 24-27 and vv. 28-30, indicate that according to Luke, Jesus knew what his audience was thinking. They would say "Physician, heal yourself" to which he responds by stating that "Prophets are not accepted in their hometown" (vv. 23, 24), a proverb that is understood to have been used in Judaism in relation to the rejection of the prophets (Edwards 2015:140). Jesus' comparison of their rejection of him to the historical rejection of the prophets enraged his audience to the extent that they wanted to kill him (v. 29).

¹²⁷ According to Edwards (2015:135), during the service first a Torah scroll and then a scroll from the Prophets were read aloud from adjacent podiums. Thus more than one scroll were read during the service.

5.6.2 The synagogue service in Luke 4:16-30

Luke's Nazareth synagogue scene contains the earliest extant information of a synagogue service (Marshall 1978:181; Edwards 2015:132). There is, however, not enough independent evidence available to validate the judgement that knowledge of specifically the Palestinian synagogue can be inferred from it (Nolland 1989:194; Runesson 2001:219; Levine 2005:158; 2011:196). However, most scholars accept that the major components of a synagogue service consisted of a prayer while entering and the reading of the Shema (Deut 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num 15:37-41). This was followed by the praying of the *Tephillah* by an individual in the congregation, and a reading from the Torah and the Prophets. A sermon based on the readings was then delivered, followed by a final blessing by a priest, if present (Marshall 1978:181; Nolland 1989:194; Kimball 1994:101; Culpepper 2015:830). However, not all these elements are reflected in Luke 4:16-30 (the prayers and blessing, and possibly other elements are missing). The reason for their absence is unclear – it could be that Luke was not aware of them or that his focus was on the pronouncement of Jesus and not the service as a whole.

Philo,¹²⁸ in his description of a synagogues service, does not provide details of the prayers in the synagogue or how they were conducted. He, however, emphasises the formal reading of the law and its expositions. According to him this was usually undertaken by a senior member (Vit Mos 2.215-16; 2.62-3) which could indicate that Jesus was considered to have some authority by the people of the synagogue in Nazareth.

¹²⁸ According to Philo: "In these they are instructed at all other times, but particularly on the seventh days. For that day has been set apart to be kept holy and on it they abstain from all other work and proceed to sacred spots which they call synagogue. There, arranged in rows according to their ages, the young below the elder, they sit decorously as befits the occasion with attentive ear. Then one takes the books and reads aloud and another of special proficiency comes forward and expounds what is not understood. For most of their philosophical study takes the form of allegory, and in this they emulate the tradition of the past" (Prob 12.81-82).

5.7 The significance of Jesus' sermon

In exploring the significance of Jesus' inauguration sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth, the following will be considered: his pronouncements recorded in vv. 18-19, the reading from Isaiah and its application, and the response to Jesus' message.¹²⁹

5.7.1 The pronouncement of the Lukan Jesus in Luke 4:18-19 within the context of Luke-Acts

The message of Jesus' sermon, which is directed at the poor (Πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ' ἐμέ, οὗ ἕνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς), is appropriate. Cassidy (1978:77) describes the poor as the central feature of Jesus' social stance in Luke. The most natural meaning of the Greek word for the poor (πτωχός) refers to economically impoverished people or people living near subsistence level (Ryan 2016:296), but also extends to include the disadvantaged, marginalised, or those of low social status in general (Green 1998:211; Stein 1992:156). The other disadvantaged members of society mentioned in v. 18 (αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν, ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει), include captives, the blind, and the oppressed, comprising an illustrative rather than a wide-ranging list of the recipients of the good news of the arrival of the kingdom. The Lukan form of the beatitudes also provides a clear indication of who the recipients are; the kingdom belongs to the poor, and blessings and the reversal of fortunes are pronounced for the outcasts of society: the poor, the hungry, the mourners, and the excluded and hated (Ryan 2016:296). As noted by Garland (2011:198), Jesus in this context is not just promising them temporary relief from poverty, but a reversal of the structures that created this condition. The focus of the Lukan Jesus on the social need of his audience does not mean that he neglected their spiritual needs (Nolland 1989:197).

The 1st century from which the text of Luke emanated was characterised as a period in which there was a wide gap between the elite and the non-elite in society (Woodbridge and

¹²⁹ There is a debate about what was the actual sermon in Nazareth in that the sermon could be the Midrash on Elijah and Elisha in vv. 25-27 or v. 21, which is supported by the response of the people in v. 22.

Semmelink 2014:61). Comprised of two main classes of people, the wealthy and the poor, most of the people in 1st-century society were part of the poor non-elite, which included peasants, artisans, slaves, day labourers, beggars and other expendable people. For them, making a living was an ongoing struggle, while the elite and possibly their retainers gained an ever-increasing share of wealth, power, status, and resources (Davids 1992:701; Miller 2014:420). The crowds who followed Jesus, who were unprepared in terms of food and shelter, seem to presuppose people familiar with little or nothing and able to survive on meagre resources (Pilgrim 1981:51).

According to Kim (1998:252), in the 1st-century period the rich and the influential increased their wealth and social status. Life for the poor was marked by sadness, curses, and the absence of any prospects of a better life. As a society that was agrarian in nature, a large percentage of the population was comprised primarily of peasant workers, who would have been cogs in a socio-economic machine that was largely controlled by a small percentage of people, especially the elite who, by virtue of their position, did everything possible to ensure that they benefited from the socio-economic machinery (Longenecker 2010:19). Jesus' pronouncement of good news to the poor and the other marginalised in the society would have challenged their elite lifestyle.

The proclamation of the good news to the poor in the synagogue at Nazareth is also related to Luke 6:20, where Jesus declares blessings for the poor and that the kingdom is theirs. The coming of the kingdom is equated to good news for those at the bottom of the social order, because it aims to reverse and reorder this system in terms of power and economics. According to Luke in 4:19, the proclamation of the kingdom is also linked to the expected Jubilee year. Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom includes the release of captives. This phrase may have different meanings, as noted by Ryan (2016:297-8). For Malina and Rohrbaugh (1992:243) it refers to release from imprisonment, for Green (1997:212) release from demonic bondage, and for Stein (1992:156) salvific release and the metaphorical release of forgiveness. While all of these are related to some extent, the view of the Malina and Rohrbaugh is preferable as the primary focus of Jesus' pronouncement. The declaration that debt prisoners would literally be released, is supported by the proclamation of good news to the impoverished in the same verse, as well as the debt forgiveness which was declared in the Jubilee year in v. 19. Here the reign of God can be understood as ushering in a new social order.

In 4:16-30 Luke expresses the Lukan Jesus' heart not only for the spiritually poor, but also for those at the margins of the society, such as women (Lk 8:1-3), children, the Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37) and the tax collectors, who were perceived as sinners who did not qualify for the kingdom of God. In doing so, Luke embraces the message of Isaiah 40-66 that focusses on the promise of salvation of Israel in the setting of social justice (see 5.5). In Isaiah 58 the salvation that is promised, depends on the people turning their backs on injustice and embracing justice and righteousness. In chapter 61 of Isaiah this role, which was originally assigned to the Israelites in chapter 58, is allocated to the Lord's servant. Therefore, Jesus' pronouncement of the fulfilment of the kingdom, should be heeded.

In the time of the Lukan Jesus, debt was not the only force that held the people of the land captive. Demonic forces also appear to have held the people captive. In Luke 13:10-17, again in a synagogue setting, Jesus is described as releasing a woman who was bound by Satan. In view of this, the healing and exorcism activities performed by Jesus can also be seen as liberation from demonic activities and forces. Thus, the coming of the kingdom of God as proclaimed by Jesus as the agent of God is holistic in nature. It brings about release from the spiritual forces of sins and demonic bondage¹³⁰ and likewise from socio-economic and political realities.¹³¹ In view of this, Ryan (2016:299) advises caution when dealing with the thoughts and writings of early Judaism, to not draw a line of separation between the economic, socio-political realm and the religious or spiritual realm. As indicated in Chapter Two, synagogues addressed the social, economic, political and religious needs of the people. According to Wilson (2006:399), a Jewish worldview, integrated historical, social, and political aspects with the religious. As far as the Jews were concerned, the religious and social aspects of society could not be separated but were understood as two sides of the same coin. In the Old Testament the covenantal sin of the nation is, for example, directly connected with the political situation of exile and destruction (Lam 1:10, 14).

The declaration by Jesus of liberation and good news for the poor through his earthly mission, indicates that for Luke the kingdom was arriving in the present (Lk 4:18-19). As associated

¹³⁰ These forces were at work in synagogues according to Luke 13:10.

¹³¹ In the Old Testament "captives" often refers to those in exile (Amos 6:7; 7:11, 17; Nah 3:10; Isa 5:13; 52:2; 61:1).

with the kingdom of God, it signifies the eschatological restoration of the nation and symbolises the transition out of darkness into light. Jesus' reply to John's question through his disciples (Lk 7:22; Matt 11:5)¹³² also sheds some light on this. It shows how Jesus' ministry and his proclamation of good news to the poor were perceived as important to Jesus' mission and identity. They are both key elements of the eschatological age, when God will judge the earth and make it right again.

5.7.2 Jesus' reading of Isaiah

Jesus' interpretation of his reading from Isaiah in Luke 4:22 is a provocative one. His reading of Isaiah 61:1-2, illuminated by a quotation from Isaiah 58:6, presents an image of the restoration of Jerusalem. It also describes Israel's future in terms of the year of Jubilee, or year of release, as recorded in Leviticus 25:10¹³³. Isaiah 58:6-7 outlines acts of social justice that suggest the kind of fasting that God desires. The deeds of compassion and righteousness that God demands, include loosening the bond of injustice, setting the oppressed free (cf. Lk 4:18), feeding the hungry, bringing the homeless poor into one's home, clothing the naked, and not hiding from one's kin. The insertion of Isaiah here further points to the promise of restoration and renewal that will come about as a result of the acts of justice, compassion and mercy found in Isaiah 58:6-12. So, the statement by Jesus that Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6 has been "fulfilled today" meant that the eschatological age, the dawn of the reign of God, was already present and coming to be. As Garland (2011:201) puts it: "Someday" is now "today", as the emphasis falls on salvation happening now, it must be heard, and the people are witnesses of the plan that God has made known beforehand in the Old Testament. The quotation of Isaiah authenticates that Jesus is going to fulfil the plan made and prophesied in the Old Testament,

¹³² It also shows that fulfilment does not occur until later in the Lukan narratives. In Luke 7:21-22 Jesus answers the question saying that the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. The passage is understood to mean that the prophecies in Isaiah 28:18-19, 35:5-6, and 61:1-2 are fulfilled. The passage is also important as it is a confirmation of Jesus' prediction in Luke 4:16-30.

¹³³ "And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his ancestral possession which through poverty he was compelled to sell, and each of you shall return to his family from whom he was separated in bond service."

even though this plan does not match the expectations of people, as is evident in their rejection of him and his message.

Edwards (2015:132; 1994:101) sees the sermon presented by Jesus as conforming to the infancy pronouncement in terms of its citation of the Old Testament promises and the identification of its fulfilment. He further views the commencement of Jesus' ministry as a public one that reinforces Luke's *leitmotif* that the Gospel is tied to the history and salvation of Israel. However, according to him, this salvation is not limited to Israel, but destined, through Israel, for all nations (cf. Gen 12:1-3). The history of salvation started with God saving the Jews and will end with its expansion to all nations. In Luke both Jews and gentiles are divinely ordained for salvation; the salvation of the gentiles should not be seen as an afterthought.

The salvation of the gentiles as part of God's plan all along, is confirmed in the two models of authentic faith from the Old Testament that the Lukan Jesus refers to. These two models of faith are the widow of Zarephath and Naaman, both of whom were gentiles (Lk 4:26-27). By identifying these gentiles as examples of faith, Jesus reaffirms that salvation is not limited to the Jews and that it cannot be viewed as an afterthought for the gentiles. This is made clear by Jesus using the formula "I assure you" (Gk. ἐπ' ἀληθείας δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν: I tell you the truth) in v. 25, which emphasises the significance of what follows in the stories of Elijah (1 Kgs 17) and Elisha (2 Kgs 5). Both stories, as already noted, emphasise the fact that salvation is not only limited to Israel, but that the gentiles are included (Edwards 2015:140).

According to Ryan (2016:305), the reading of the scroll from Isaiah in the synagogue by Jesus, was a clear announcement to the congregation in Jesus's hometown that the reign of God had begun; the time is near, the eschatological year of the Jubilee is here, and the restoration is coming. The inclusion of Isaiah 58:6 between 61:1 and 2 also implies that the acts of obedience in the form of practicing justice and mercy, were important requirements for participation in Israel's restoration. In the nation, the king was seen as the one responsible for ensuring that justice is done. But both the nation and the king neglected the task. The ancient servant, as recorded in Isaiah 61, therefore brings the message of justice to the oppressed according to Isaiah 58. Jesus' pronouncement in Luke 4 thus had political implications. Jesus' reading was a pronouncement of the message of the kingdom of God, the restoration it would bring, and its socio-economic effects in the local religio-political institution. If the people in the synagogue

chose to welcome his pronouncement, it would impact the course of their lives. But it appears they chose not to do so.

5.7.3 The response to Jesus' message

Jesus' initial message (Luke 4:18-29) was, according to Luke, well-received by the people. The people are said to have been amazed by the words that came out of Jesus' mouth (Isaak 2006:1231). The exposition of the message implied that the awaited hour of salvation has come. The year of God's favour was being ushered in by Jesus' message of the Gospel to the poor, and mighty deeds being done. Above all, the Scripture has been fulfilled in the person of Jesus, on whom the Spirit rests. He has been set aside as the last prophet. He is the Messiah and the Servant of Yahweh. Through Jesus' word forgiveness of sins can be obtained (Marshall 1978:178), and this forgiveness is fulfilled in their midst. In Jesus' exposition of the passage, he declares, "today" this scripture is fulfilled.¹³⁴ The captives mentioned in the text are assumed to be debtors in prison. Their release can be understood to refer to the Jubilee year when debt was annulled. The year of the Lord's favour mentioned in the text can also be understood as a year-long Sabbath (Deut 15:1-3) (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992:309).

Unlike his initial words, Jesus' elaboration on his reading and pronouncement in vv. 24-27 evoke a fierce response. Even before Jesus has finished speaking, the townspeople cast their vote against him. The crowd, who were initially convinced by Jesus words, at the end struggle to understand how such a teaching can come from someone born in a lowly stratum of society (he was the son of Joseph, who had a low status). They therefore decide to kill Jesus.¹³⁵ In order to do this, the villagers drive Jesus out of his town (v. 29). The phrase καὶ ἀναστάντες ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως (They arose and cast him out of the town), is used in the LXX for ridding a Jewish city of defilement, such as plague (Lev 14:40-41, 45), foreign gods (2 Chr 33:15), or evil person (1 Kgs 21:13). The phrase is an indication of their anger against Jesus, who is treated like a gentile. The phrase is also a prediction of what will happen to Jesus in Jerusalem

¹³⁴ According to Keener (2014:191) it was not Jesus' interpretation of Scripture that offended his hearers, but rather his claim to be privy to God's plan for the end time.

¹³⁵ Their wrath in v. 28 anticipates, with virtually the same Greek phraseology, the wrath of the Ephesians at Paul's preaching of the Gospel in Acts 19:28 (Edwards 2015:41).

and to his followers, as Stephen was thrown out of the city, resulting in Stephens' death (Acts 7:58; 14:5-6). The exact location of the "brow" of the hill from which the townspeople attempt to hurl him, is not known (Edwards 2015:141). But the rabbinic tradition, according to Edwards (2015:141), is understood to have prescribed stoning a blasphemer or idolater to death; throwing a person off a cliff was not prescribed. However, it should be noted that in Acts the brother of Jesus is thrown from the temple parapet and stoned to death. It is thus not impossible that the attempt to throw Jesus off the hill was intended as a prelude to stoning him.

5.8 The synagogue as the religio-political context of Jesus' sermon in Luke 4:16-30

This study has raised the possibility that the synagogue in Nazareth was a public one and not an association synagogue (cf. 5.3), which in turn implies the possibility that this important and programmatic message was read not in an association synagogue, but in a public one. According to Ryan (2016:297), the importance of the religio-political institutional context of Jesus' proclamation of good news to the poor within a public synagogue has been neglected in the past.

In order to understand the importance of the reading of Isaiah by the Lukan Jesus in a public synagogue, one needs to understand what the public synagogue stood for. According to Runesson (2001:216), the synagogue where Jesus read, was a public locale, most likely a building. As a public synagogue, it was the gathering place for all the people of the town. There were no separate religious or political group meetings (Punt and Sewun 2013:5). With this in mind, one may assume that Jesus' rejection in his hometown in a setting of this nature, indicates that he was rejected by the entire community. Conversely, if Jesus had succeeded in convincing the community members who gathered in the synagogue, their acceptance of his message would possibly have been authoritative for the entire community of Nazareth.

The Lukan Jesus may have envisioned that he could then move to the next public synagogue in order to convince them and in so doing convert communities one after the other. The synagogue as locale and a gathering of people could then have been used by Jesus as the vehicle for accomplishing the fulfilment of the message he read in the synagogue. If a public synagogue was transformed to reflect the ethics of the kingdom of God, the community would have been

transformed. If this was the case, the Lukan Jesus was not intending to transform Galilean society by disposing of their king or defeating the Romans, but rather through the alignment of the synagogues one by one by gaining the approval of those who attended the synagogues.

It appears that the Lukan Jesus anticipated that his hometown's public synagogue would be difficult to convince (vv. 23-24). According to Ryan (2016:301), the persuasion of the public (those present), the conferral of honour,¹³⁶ and the recognition of wisdom were required for a proposal to go forward and for an interpretation of Scripture to be accepted and put into practice. People who were recognised to have honour, were likely able to convince a congregation to accept a given interpretation or any decision they proposed. Both the interpreter and their interpretation were on trial in a synagogue meeting.

According to v. 22, neither Jesus' ascribed honour as the son of Joseph nor his acquired honour as a prophet (v. 24) were sufficient for him to convince those who were present in the synagogue in Nazareth. The reason seems to be that they knew Jesus' family background, and thus his respective honour status (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992:309), and therefore, to them, he was making a claim that was not in line with his status (Lk 4:18-19). Jesus' response to their rejection, that no prophet is accepted in his hometown, gives the impression that the honour that his prophetic words deserved, was not recognised simply because his hometown knew his background.¹³⁷ His proclamation was primarily rejected because, according to them, he did not merit the status of a prophet.

In Luke 4 it was, furthermore, not Jesus' reading that was rejected, but his interpretation that it was fulfilled among those present in v. 21. The rejection of Jesus' interpretation of Scripture (which he could have repeated in the public synagogues of other towns though Luke does not mention this), was not confined to Nazareth. In Luke 10:13-16 (cf. Matt 11:20-24), Jesus

¹³⁶ In his explanation of honour and shame, Plevnik (2000:106) understands honour and shame as essential standards of life in the Mediterranean world in general and even the Bible as a whole. As an important standard of life in the ancient Mediterranean world, honour determined a person's position and place in a given society, especially in the Mediterranean world. The position of honour was marked by boundaries that included power, sexual status, and position in the social stratification of the society.

¹³⁷ The use of Elijah and Elisha in vv. 25-27 by Jesus should not be seen to signal Jesus' shift to a gentile mission, since neither prophet had given up on Israel and turned to the gentiles (Ryan 2016:310).

declares woes on other Galilean villages for their failure to repent. This implies that all these locations failed to accept his message and repent. Though it is not mentioned explicitly, Jesus may have preached his message and done his powerful deeds in their respective synagogues.

5.9 The Lukan Paul's engagement with the synagogue

In this section Luke's description of Paul's engagement with the synagogue in Acts will be briefly surveyed. This will be done to ascertain whether Luke depicts Paul as following a similar strategy of visiting public synagogues in the Diaspora as Jesus did in Galilee.

Acts can be divided into two sections, chapter 1-12 and 13-28, with the second section dominated by Paul's missionary activities. It is in the second section that the most details are found on Paul's engagement with the synagogue according to the writer Luke. In Acts, Luke presents Paul as a true Pharisee¹³⁸ and a participant in the activities of the synagogue. Like the Lukan Jesus in Luke 4:16-30, Paul, according to Luke, starts his missionary activities in the synagogue immediately after his commission in Acts 13:1-5.¹³⁹ This gives the impression that for Paul the synagogue was a strategic point for starting his ministry. Luke portrays Paul and Barnabas proclaiming the Gospel in the synagogue (Acts 13:5) (Perry 2009:160) and therefore, for Luke, both Palestinian (Lk 4:16-30) and Diaspora synagogues functioned as locations for interpreting Israel's law and heritage. It is noteworthy that Paul's strategy of beginning his ministry in each new city he visited in the locale of the synagogue, met with more success than Jesus' in the Gospel of Luke.

¹³⁸ In Acts 21:39 and 22:3 Paul repeatedly states that "I am a man" and "I am a Pharisee, a son of a Pharisee" (Acts 23:6), "who believes...the law" (Acts 24:14) and does not commit any offense "against the law" (Acts 25:8). From these passages one can infer that Luke presents Paul's understanding of his message and actions with a detailed intertextual engagement with Israel's Scripture.

¹³⁹ It is important to keep in mind that Luke's depiction of the synagogue as the locus of Paul's ministry is his understanding thereof, and not necessarily a historical description of Paul's ministry. Paul, however, makes no mention of the synagogue in his letters. Nor does he provide evidence that he, as the apostle of the gentiles (Rom 11:13; Gal 1:15ff), viewed the synagogue as a starting point for his missionary activity (Frankemolle 1983:296).

5.9.1 The synagogue in Pisidian Antioch

In Pisidian Antioch, after the reading of the law and the Prophets, Paul and Barnabas are requested by the synagogue rulers to offer “a word of exhortation to the people in Cyprus” (13:15) (Murray 1998:195; Malina and Pilch 2008:89).¹⁴⁰ It was the task of the officer to invite visitors to offer some words of exhortation, as is clear in the cases of Jesus (Lk 4:16-30) and Paul. The exhortation in Acts 13 is Paul’s first major address to fellow Israelites and is understood to be a Lukan composition, as is that of Peter in Acts 2:14-36 (Malina and Pilch 2008:93). According to Malina and Pilch (2008:93), this composition should not be taken as a sermon, but as a speech. Like Jesus, Paul is pictured as standing up to read the Scripture, an action that was common in the synagogue service (Perry 2009:162).¹⁴¹

Luke describes the effect of Paul’s speech as very successful. The strategy of Paul and Barnabas of choosing the locale of the local public synagogue, resulted in them being invited to continue their ministry the next week (Acts 13:42), while Luke mentions that many of the Jews and God-fearers¹⁴² were convinced by them (Acts 13:42). It is only with the second meeting in the

¹⁴⁰ On this missionary journey Paul and his team traverse the island of Cyprus in a southwest direction starting at Salamis and ending at Paphos, its Roman capital. Cyprus would not have been difficult to navigate since Barnabas was from the island and owned land there (Acts 4:36). One would thus expect him to have a knowledge of the whereabouts of the Judean assembly in Salamis (Malina and Pilch 2008:89).

¹⁴¹ In Luke 4:16-30 Jesus is also portrayed observing this custom of reading while standing and offering an exposition while sitting down (see 5.6.3).

¹⁴² Luke-Acts provides some indication that a number of God-fearers were patrons of the early Christian community (Moxnes 1994:384; Malina and Pilch 2008:75-6). The portrayal of Cornelius as one with a good standing among the Jews (Acts 10:1-2, 122) indicates that he was kind to the Jewish synagogue and may have served as its patron. In the Lukan narrative of the centurion’s son (Lk 7:1-10), this also seems to be the case, as the centurion is said to have built a synagogue for the Jewish community (Moxnes 1991:242; Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992:326-7). The stories of these two centurions are key in several ways. They indicate that highly placed Roman officials were interested in Christianity and illustrate how important they were to the Jewish synagogues and the first Christians themselves. These patrons possibly not only provided them with materials like food and houses, but also with protection. However, their presence and role caused conflict within the Jewish community since there was a clear rule regarding purity that prevented Jews from having fellowship with non-Jews (Moxnes 1994:384). An example of such conflict is evident in Acts 10-11, where the revelation Peter received from God, made him break with the purity guidelines and engage in table fellowship with Cornelius, a non-Jew. These God-fearers possibly provided a bridge between Jewish and non-Jewish Christians in Luke’s community (Esler 1987:109).

synagogue, at which almost the whole city gathered (indicating that it was a typical public synagogue in the Diaspora), that they met with resistance from the Jews (Acts 13:44-45). The results of their strategy of focussing on the public synagogue in Pisidian Antioch were thus mixed. While they did not succeed in convincing the entire synagogue, and thereby also the entire community, the gentiles accepted their message and it spread throughout the countryside despite the opposition from the Jews, which resulted in them being expelled from the city (Acts 13:48-51).

5.9.2 The synagogue in Iconium

On arriving in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas continued to implement their strategy of using the public synagogue as the locus for their ministry (Acts 14:1). Again, they achieve mixed results in that they convince a large number of Jews and gentiles (supporting the view that the synagogues were to some extent open to gentiles) (Acts 14:2) but not all of them. The city is described by Luke as being divided in their response to their message (Acts 14:3). The result is that they are strongly opposed by the Jewish leadership, resulting in them having to flee the city (Acts 14:7).

5.9.3 The place of prayer in Philippi

On his second journey Paul continues with this strategy. In Philippi, which possibly had no synagogue building, Paul goes to the place of prayer (προσευχή)¹⁴³ instead (Acts 16:13). In this place of prayer Paul and Silas succeed in converting Lydia and her household.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ See 5.8.3 on προσευχή as an alternative name for a synagogue.

¹⁴⁴ A woman like Lydia may have been the head of her household in Greco-Roman culture either because her husband had died, or she had divorced, or she was a single woman of means (Peterson 2009:461).

5.9.4 The synagogue in Thessalonica

In Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue, Luke mentions that, just like Jesus, it was Paul's custom to frequent the synagogue to use it as a locale for reasoning from the Scriptures regarding Jesus' death and resurrection (Acts 17:1-5). In his first session with Jews at the synagogue in Thessalonica, Paul presents his arguments for the unique Christian interpretation of the Messiah from Scripture as one who had to suffer and be raised from the dead. He goes ahead and makes it plain to them that it is this suffering and resurrected Christ that he proclaims to them (Pelikan 2005:189).

As is the pattern in Acts, Paul's strategy in Thessalonica has mixed results. The converts in Thessalonica included an impressive number of prominent Greek women and men (Holladay 2016:334-5). Unlike Jesus, Paul succeeds in convincing a public synagogue and therefore also the community it serves. While he does not succeed in convincing the entire synagogue, even though he had more than one Sabbath to do so, a number of Jews and Greeks believe his message and join him and Silas¹⁴⁵ (Acts 17:4). This stirs up the Jews to start a riot against Paul (Acts 17:5). It is clear from this account and previous ones, that the strategy of using the local public synagogue was an effective, but high risk one.

5.9.5 The synagogue in Berea

Acts 17:10-12 describes how Paul and Silas are sent away by the believers in Thessalonica due to the resistance they encountered. On arrival in Berea, Paul and Silas again first went to the Jew's synagogue. Unlike the synagogue in Thessalonica, Paul and his team were well accepted by the believers there who closely investigated the Gospel to confirm its truthfulness. Many people who heard the Gospel were convinced by it and converted to the Gospel of Jesus. It can thus be accepted that in Thessalonica Paul's strategy of beginning his ministry in the local public synagogue succeeded in that his message was eagerly accepted (μετὰ πάσης προθυμίας) according to Luke 17:11.

¹⁴⁵ This passage also indicates that Luke accepted that the gentiles engaged to some extent with various synagogues.

5.9.6 The synagogue in Corinth

In Acts 18:1-26 and 19:8-9 Paul again meets with resistance from the Jews in Corinth. He is described by Luke as engaging and arguing with both Jews and gentiles on the Sabbath in the public¹⁴⁶ synagogue (Acts 18:4). In these passages, Paul is given time to preach and testify to the Jews of the saving message of Jesus Christ. Paul is in the synagogue and described as trying to influence both Jews and Greeks through the Gospel. As in Acts 14:1; 17:4; and 12, these Greeks are understood to be gentiles who were attached to the synagogue and can be identified as God-fearers (Peterson 2009:509).¹⁴⁷ In Corinth Paul's strategy of attempting to convert the synagogue in order to convince the entire community, again has mixed success. While he succeeds in converting the leader of the synagogue and his family along with some of the Corinthians (Acts 18:10), he is rejected by the majority. It is only when he is banned by the public synagogue members that Paul moves the setting of his ministry to the house of Titius Justus, a gentile who worshipped God and whose house was next door to the synagogue. It is also important that though Crispus, the president of the synagogue, came to believe in the Jesus along with his entire household (Acts 18:7-8), Paul still had to abandon the synagogue as a locale for ministry.

There is some external evidence for the existence of a synagogue in Corinth from the discovery of a fragmentary inscription from it dated between 100 BCE and 400 CE. It is also no surprise that a wealthy and cosmopolitan city such as Corinth contained a colony of Jews, or that they would have been able to afford a building (Peterson 2009:509). Acts 18:1-17 indicates that while Paul's ministry to the Jews in Corinth was productive, it was also very challenging. The Lord himself is even said by Luke to have appeared to Paul and encouraged him not to be afraid as he was with him (Acts 18:9-10). This may, however, be attributed to the size and influence of the Jewish community in the city. As in v. 12, the Jews made a united attack on Paul. This

¹⁴⁶ It can be described as a public synagogue because it is in the Diaspora and because both Jews and gentiles attended it.

¹⁴⁷ Because of the high moral values of Judaism during the time of the New Testament, many people were attracted to Judaism and regularly attended synagogue services. They became known as "God-fearers" (McCain 2011:64). Their presence supports the argument that the synagogue was more inclusive than the Jerusalem Temple (2.8.2).

gives the impression that Paul's ministry of the Gospel in the synagogue was not free from challenges, as was the case for Jesus in Luke 4:16-30.

5.9.7 Summary of Paul's engagement with the synagogue in Acts

From the discussion above it appears that Luke's understanding of Paul's engagement with the synagogue aligns with the other synoptic gospels and the New Testament. The synagogue, according to Luke-Acts, was a Jewish institution closely linked with the Sabbath and concerned principally with acts of teaching, preaching, healing and punishment. It was also a place of prayer and reading from the Prophets. However, like in the other synoptic gospels, especially Matthew (see 3.2.1), almsgiving as a function of the synagogue is not explicitly mentioned but implied.

In Acts Luke more than once describes how Paul used a synagogue as location for preaching the Gospel. However, it also appears that the public synagogues, while being strategic places for starting their respective ministries because of their religio-political importance, were not long-term locales for their ministries. While both Jesus and Paul are described as faithful Jews customarily attending the synagogue, and even using the synagogue as a locale for preaching and interpreting the Torah (and in the case of Paul for preaching the Gospel), they did so despite the rejection they often suffered.

For example, in Ephesus, Paul was publicly rejected and had to leave the synagogue and instead use a lecture hall in Tyrannus as his locale. This locale later functioned as a substitute for the synagogue as a space for public teaching and discourse, though Christians also gathered in their houses to minister to one another (a pattern set in Acts 2:42-47) (see Peterson 2009:534). Thus, conflict and expulsion characterised the synagogue as a locale for ministry and both Jesus and Paul ultimately had to withdraw from the synagogue to alternative locales for their ministry, like the town hall or a household. Since Luke portrays Paul as using a town hall and the houses of benefactors as locales for preaching the Gospel, it is necessary to look at the relationship between the synagogue, the household and the ἐκκλησία in Luke-Acts.

5.10 The role of the household in Luke-Acts

It is important to give a brief overview of the relationship between the synagogue and the household in Luke-Acts¹⁴⁸ because, as mentioned above, in Acts Paul moves from the synagogue as the locale for his ministry to the household (Acts 18:5-8). He, for example, left the synagogue and went to the house of Titus Justus when he was opposed in the synagogue in Corinth. He also visited the house of a woman called Lydia in Philippi where he preached the Gospel and she and her entire household became followers of Christ (Acts 16:15ff.). The question is, what was the relationship between the household and the synagogue as it relates to the emergence of the church?¹⁴⁹ Did Paul despair of convincing the public synagogues in the Diaspora and converting their communities and instead targeted households?

The influence of the household is obvious in Luke's narrative of the spread of Christianity in Luke-Acts. The third gospel starts in the Temple with the account of Zachariah's priestly service (Lk 1:5-23) and concludes with the disciples parting ways with the resurrected Lord and returning to Jerusalem where they continue to the Temple, blessing God (Lk 24:50-53). However, in the second volume (Acts) the household seems to play a more prominent role in that it begins with the gathering of the faithful (Acts 1:12-14) and ends with Paul's house imprisonment in Rome and his unrestricted proclamation of the good news (Acts 28:30-31) (Elliot 1991:229). It appears that for Luke the Christian households were the waystations that enabled the growth of the good news about Jesus Christ from Galilee to Rome. This is reinforced by examples in Luke-Acts and the letters of Paul and the Deutero-Pauline epistles that testify to the spread of Christianity through the household (Meeks 1983:75-6).

In both Luke and Acts the household provides a locale for a variety of activities in the lives of Jesus and his disciples (Elliot 1991:225-9). These include the proclamation of the Gospel that also brings about salvation from sin and the presence of the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:39-56; 5:17-26; 7:36-50), teaching (Lk 7:36-50), healing (Lk 4:38-41), prophecy (Acts 2:1-21; 21:8-14), revelation and visions (Lk 1:26-38), acknowledgement of the resurrection of Christ (Lk 24:28-

¹⁴⁸ In Luke-Acts an οἶκος (house, household, family) refers to the family household and property or possessions (Pfammatter 1991:495; Weigandt 1991:500). The term οἶκος is mentioned 25 times in Luke and 12 times in Acts (Elliot 1991:225).

¹⁴⁹ According to Meeks (1983:80): "Christianity was an offshoot of Judaism. The Pauline Christians had the Diaspora synagogue as the most natural model to emulate."

32), the true definition of Jesus' family (Lk 8:19-21), hospitality and lodging (Lk 19:1-10), sharing of meals and table fellowship (Lk 5:29-39), and worship which included prayers, praise, fasting and eating the Passover meal, "baptism", and the Lord's Dinner with his disciples all took place in households (Lk 1:39-56; 22:2-38; 24:28-35; Acts 1:14; 2:42-47; 4:23-31).

The household was not only the locale where the Gospel was preached and received. It also represented the platform and social structure that eased the spread of the Gospel from Palestine to Rome (Acts 20:20-21). The household was inclusive and functioned as Luke's key model for portraying the kind of social life anticipated in the kingdom of God. It also played a role in the sharing and supplying of goods to those in need (Lk 19:1-10; Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-37). It appears that the household, like the synagogue, functioned as an institution that was not only concerned with the spiritual needs of people. It also attended to their economic and social needs. Economically and socially, the household constituted independent, self-sufficient communities based on kinship and household management. But apparently the household was not part of the Palestinian power structure other than providing economic resources. Thus, while it played a vital role in the spread of the Gospel, it did not play a major role in politics.

Like Jesus, Paul in Acts is driven out of the synagogue so that he too must change the locus of his preaching of the Gospel to the household. It is thus no surprise that the household played an important role in advancing the Gospel and the expansion of the church. It should, however, be noted that the use of the house as a location for preaching the Gospel did not necessarily mean that the apostle and his companions were driven out of every synagogue they visited and that they therefore had to use a household as an alternative in every location. This is clear from Acts 16:15 and 40, where the church in Philippi gathered in Lydia's house since there was no synagogue available for them to worship in.

Jesus' and Paul's engagements with the synagogue provide a picture of initial success, followed by conflict and the later expulsion of the Jesus movement (Lk 4:16-30; Acts 9:20ff; 13:44ff; 14:1ff). This Lukan arrangement can explain both the initial split among the people of God and even the kind of relationship between Israel and the church later (Frankemolle 1983:295-296). However, as this description is a reworking of historical recollection, its validity as a historical record must remain an open question, even if the existence of synagogues in Damascus, Salamis on Cyprus, Antioch, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus, and several in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9; 24:12) is historically accurate.

5.11 Comparison of Luke's description of the synagogue with ancient descriptions

In this section a comparative approach (1.7.1.3) will be followed to briefly compare the Luke-Acts description of the synagogue with what is known of the synagogue from ancient sources (cf. Chapter Two). The table below will help to illustrate and demonstrate functionaries and functions in the ancient synagogue and the synagogue in Luke-Acts. However, the aim of the table is not to match them, but to compare them.

Table 3

| FUNCTIONARIES IN THE ANCIENT SYNAGOGUE | FUNCTIONARIES IN THE SYNAGOGUE IN LUKE-ACTS |
|---|--|
| ἀρχισυναγωγών | ἀρχισυνάγωγος Luke 8:49, 13:14 |
| ἄρχων | ἄρχων Luke 8:41 |
| ὕπηρέτης | ὕπηρέτης Luke 4:20 |
| γραμματεῖς | |
| Πρεσβυτέρος | Πρεσβυτέρος Luke 7:3-4 |
| ἱερέων | |

Table 4

| FUNCTIONS OF THE ANCIENT SYNAGOGUE | FUNCTIONS OF THE SYNAGOGUE IN LUKE-ACTS |
|--|---|
| Reading and exposition of Scripture | κηρύσσων (Preaching) Luke 4:44, Acts 13:31, 14:3, 17:10-15 ἀναγνῶναι (Reading) Luke 4:16-20, Acts 13:15 ἐδίδασκεν (Teaching) Luke 4:15, 4:31-32, 6:6, 13:14, Acts 17:10-15 κατήγγελλον (Proclamation) Acts 13:5 ἀνάγνωσιν (Exhortation) Luke 13:15 διελέξατο (Interpretation, reasoning) Acts 17:1-5 |
| | Φαρμακευτικός (Healing) and εξορκισμός (Exorcism) Luke 4:30-44, 6:6-10, 13:11-13 |
| Prayer | |
| Treasury | |
| Museum, archives, school | |
| Place of refuge | |
| Charity | |
| Councils halls, courts, and society houses | παραδιδόντες (Punishment) Luke 21:12, 24 |

| | |
|--|--|
| Manumission | |
| Festivals, holy days and communal dining | |

From the tables above it is clear that there are both similarities and differences between what we know of the ancient synagogue (2.6) and how Luke describes it in his work.¹⁵⁰ In terms of functionaries, Luke mentions some of the functionaries of the ancient synagogue, but not all of them. Regarding functions, Luke mentions fewer ministries of the synagogue than what is known about the ancient synagogue's ministries. While Luke mentions teaching (exposition and reading of the Scripture), prayers, and punishment, he also adds exorcism, preaching and healing, but does not mention manumission. It is clear that Luke's descriptions of the synagogue overlap with what is known of the ancient synagogue. It also appears that the synagogue ministries of Jesus and Paul differed according to Luke's two narratives. While Jesus' actions in the synagogue included teaching, healing, and exorcism, Paul's seem to have centred on preaching and teaching.

5.12 Analysis of the synagogue as locale for the ministries of Jesus and Paul

In this section an overview will be given of the social situations that Luke depicts Jesus and Paul addressing and the strategy they followed, taking an analytical approach (1.7.1.2).

In this study it was proposed that a distinction needs to be made between public synagogues and association synagogues. While public synagogues were common in the 1st century CE in Galilee, Judea and the larger Mediterranean world, association synagogues were found only in Palestine. They were a Jewish form of the Greco-Roman voluntary associations run by specific

¹⁵⁰ Luke may have transferred Palestinian terminology to the meeting houses of the Diaspora and at the same time passed on the traditional Palestinian form of the synagogue worship service (Lk 4:16-30; Acts 13:14-15).

groups like the Essenes to serve the needs of a particular group of people. Unlike association synagogues, public ones played a major role in the formation of the views of a community. They were strategic religio-political locales for influencing a community.

5.12.1 The synagogue as locale for the ministry of Jesus in Luke

The possibility that the synagogue in Luke 4 was a public one, implies that if Jesus had succeeded in convincing the community members who gathered to accept his message, it would have impacted the entire community of Nazareth and not only a particular grouping therein. Thus, the Lukan Jesus may have envisioned that he could move from public synagogue to public synagogue in order to convince them and in so doing, influence the different communities they represented. If this was the case, the Lukan Jesus did not intend to transform Galilean society by disposing of their king or defeating the Romans. He instead intended to transform it by gaining the approval of its most important local religio-political institution, the synagogue, one synagogue at a time. This strategy of Jesus of beginning his ministry in the locale of a public synagogue, however, failed at the outset, with Jesus being emphatically rejected by his hometown's synagogue.

In terms of the social situation that Luke depicts Jesus addressing, it is clear that he saw Jesus as not just promising relief from poverty (5.6.2), but also a reversal of the structures that gave rise to the dire position of the poor. While the references to the poor and the captives in Luke 4:16-30 may have had a spiritual connotation, the socio-historical study of the text and its relation to the Gospel of Luke has shown that these groups were socially impoverished due to systematic injustice in their society. They were also not only economically poor, but also marginalised in that they were excluded from fellowship. This group included those who had lost the competitive race for scarce resources, economic security, honour, and power. For these people their only hope of survival lay in God. Jesus' ministry thus challenged the members of the synagogues to fulfil their role in addressing their communities' needs.

5.12.2 The synagogue as locale for the ministry of Paul in Acts

According to Luke, unlike Jesus, Paul's use of the synagogue was more successful. It appears that:

(a) In Pisidian Antioch (5.8.1) Paul and Barnabas' strategy of focussing on the public synagogue had a mixed response. While they did not succeed in converting the entire synagogue, and thereby also the entire community, the gentiles accepted their message.

(b) In Iconium (5.8.2) Paul and Barnabas continued to implement their strategy of using the public synagogue as the locus for their ministry with mixed results in that they convinced a large number of Jews and gentiles (Acts 14:2), but not all of them.

(c) In Philippi (5.8.3), where there was no synagogue building, Paul went to the place of prayer (προσευχή), where he converted Lydia and her household.

(d) In the synagogue in Thessalonica (5.8.4) Paul's strategy again had mixed results. While he did not succeed in swaying the entire synagogue, a large number of Jews and Greeks did believe his message and joined him and Silas.

(e) In Berea (5.8.5) Paul's strategy succeeded in that his message was eagerly accepted.

(f) In Corinth (5.8.6) he succeeded in converting the leader of the synagogue and his family along with some of the Corinthians (Acts 18:10), but was rejected by the majority.

It is clear from this summary that Paul's strategy of using the local public synagogue to launch his ministry was an effective, but high risk one, unlike a strategy of going from house to house, which would not have evoked an immediate public response in a very short time period as the use of the synagogue did.

Though the message Paul preached in the various synagogues was that of Jesus and his death and resurrection, it is clear that, according to Luke, it was perceived by his opponents as disruptive, and thereby threatening the order of the entire Roman world (Acts 17:6-7).

5.13 Conclusion

This chapter conducted a socio-historical study of the synagogue as depicted in Luke-Acts in general, and in Luke 4:16-30 in particular. It began by giving an overview of references to the synagogue in Luke-Acts (5.2). The importance of Jesus' inaugural sermon was discussed next (5.3) before a translation of Luke 4:16-30 was given (5.4) and its sources and exegetical problems were discussed (5.5). The focus of the chapter was the socio-historical reading of Luke 4:16-30 (5.6), the significance of Jesus' sermon (5.7), its significance within the Gospel of Luke and its religio-political context (5.8).

Thereafter Paul's engagement with the synagogue according to Luke was surveyed (5.9). Brief attention was paid to the role of the household in Luke-Acts (5.10) before a comparison between Luke's description of the synagogue and ancient sources was undertaken (5.11) and an analysis was made of the synagogue as locale for the ministries of Jesus and Paul (5.12).

The overview of the synagogues in Luke-Acts revealed that it shares some materials with other New Testament books, especially Mark, but that it also contains additional material. The socio-historical reading of Luke 4:16-30 indicated that the synagogue in Nazareth replicated the functions of ancient synagogues. The religio-political context of the synagogue in Nazareth appears to be that of a public synagogue open to all people which provided a platform where a fair representation of the community could be reached. The chapter has also shown that the role of the synagogue described in both Luke and Acts aligns with the rules of the synagogue as discussed in Chapter Two, but that not all the roles discussed in the ancient synagogue are replicated in Luke-Acts.

In view of the argument made in this chapter, Jesus and Paul commencing their ministries in synagogues in Luke-Acts can be understood as a way of introducing their ministries to the general public, since the synagogue provided a religio-political platform for gaining the approval of the entire community. If a synagogue accepted the message of Jesus or Paul, this would have resulted in the focus and scope of the synagogues' ministries being aligned with the kingdom of God. The result would have been that the first followers of Jesus would not have needed to start new ministries, or move to another venue. The ministries of the synagogues would have continued, but with a new focus. The broad role played by the synagogue in the ancient world (2.7) means that this new focus, aligned with the messages of Jesus and Paul

according to Luke, would have had a major impact on their local communities. According to Luke's narrative, however, neither Jesus nor Paul succeeded in gaining acceptance in all the public synagogues they addressed. This could be why Paul, according to Luke, had to turn to private houses as alternative locales for his preaching and ministry. This, however, does not change the fact that the synagogue was a strategic, if not permanent, locale for the ministries of the Lucan Jesus and Paul.

Chapter Six – *Summary and conclusion*

6.1 Introduction

This dissertation investigated the synagogue as locus for ministry in Luke-Acts. The motivation for the study was that no studies previous studies have focussed on the role of the synagogue in Luke-Acts in the ministry of both Jesus and Paul. This study further investigated whether the ministry of Jesus, as recorded by Luke in Luke 4:16-30, had a strategic intention. The following research questions were formulated in 1:5:

1. What was the function of the ancient synagogue within in Judaism?
2. Did Jesus beginning his ministry in a synagogue (Luke 4:16-30) and Paul doing the same (Acts 13:4-5) signal the intent of their respective missions, as well as how they intended to accomplish it?

The aim of seeking to answer these two questions was to understand how the Lukan Jesus and Paul used the synagogue as a location for addressing their communities' spiritual and material needs according to Luke.

In this concluding chapter, an overview of the study will be given (6.2), followed by a summary of its conclusions (6.3), where after it will reflect on how the engagement of Jesus and his disciples in the synagogue, which addressed the needs of the community, can possibly be applied to the Nigerian church in order to address the various needs of its faith communities (6.4). The application of the conclusions of this study to the Nigerian church is due to the motivation for this research in 1.2.

6.2 Overview

Chapter One introduced the research focus and key terminology (1.1), provided the motivation for the research (1.2) and gave an overview of the study, before outlining the aim (1.3), research questions (1.4) and scope of the study (1.5). This was followed by a survey of previous studies

on the ancient synagogue (1.6). The survey focussed on the nature and function (1.6.1), and role of the synagogue (1.6.2), as well as new approaches to its origin (1.6.3). The survey confirmed that the ancient synagogue was an important institution in the life of the Jews and a symbol of their unity wherever they found themselves away from the Temple. The first chapter also described the methodology that was used in the study. The chosen methodology was a socio-historical one that focussed on various social aspects of the ancient synagogue from a historical point of view (1.7). In studying the sociological aspects of the synagogue, three elements of a sociological approach identified by Theissen (1977:3), the constructive, analytical and comparative approaches, were briefly discussed.

In Chapter Two a historical survey of the synagogue and its roles was undertaken. Firstly, different theories on the origin of the synagogue were considered (2.2). These include an early origin in Israel (2.2.1), a Babylonian origin (2.2.2), a Judean post-exilic origin (2.2.3), and a Second Temple period origin (2.2.4). Thereafter the architecture (2.3.1), and the different names and functions (2.3.2) were examined. From this survey it was concluded that while establishing the origin of the synagogue remains an elusive task, it appears that the most likely period for its emergence is early in the 1st century, as by this time it was the key locale for the social and religious life of Jewish communities. It would have been a logical locale for Jews like Jesus and Paul to commence their respective ministries.

Chapter Two also studied the intertestamental period and the synagogue in the Diaspora (2.5), and the function of the synagogue and its role in meeting the needs of the community as other institutions did in the Greco-Roman world (2.6). Here a long list of activities that were linked to the synagogue as locale, were identified (2.7). These include reading and exposition of Scripture, prayer, festivals, holy days and communal dining. The synagogue, furthermore, functioned as a treasury, museum, archive and school, as well as a place of refuge, while also providing charity and serving as a council hall, court, society house and place for manumission. The role of the synagogue in terms of ritual bathing was also discussed. Other influences on the synagogue like the city gate and the Temple were briefly discussed (2.8), before the functionaries (2.9) and the position of women were considered (2.10). Finally, the relationship between the synagogue and the ἐκκλησία was reflected on (2.11). This survey of the role of the synagogue was necessary in order to determine whether the synagogues in Luke-Acts, and the one in Luke 4:16-30 in particular, functioned in a similar manner to what we know about the ancient synagogue.

It is clear from the research undertaken that the architecture, leadership, and order of the service of the synagogue varied from place to place. There was apparently no fixed community rule that was enforced over a length of time all across the ancient world. The role, leadership and ministries of the various synagogues instead appear to have been strongly influenced by the contexts in which they functioned. This was especially the case of those in the Diaspora due to their distance from Jerusalem.

The synagogue provided a locale in which a different form of worship to that in the Temple was developed. It embraced a wide range of religious activities, including Scripture readings, communal prayers, hymns, Targum, and sermons. Instead of sacrifices, which characterised the Temple, the synagogue gave priority to the public recitation of communal prayer, and the reading, translation and exposition of sacred texts (2.5). Men and women appear to have sat separately to listen to the reading and exposition of the set passages from the Torah and the Prophets,¹⁵¹ and to join in liturgical prayers. During the week, the synagogue served as the local school, the community centre, and the focus of the local government. As a meeting place, it was used for reciting the Torah and studying the commandments and, most importantly, as a place of prayer. In this manner the synagogue enabled the Jews to maintain their identity.

The ruler of the synagogue supervised the service and ensured that its activities were carried out in accordance with tradition. An attendant (Lk 4:20) was responsible for bringing the scrolls of Scripture for reading, placing them in the ark, punishing offending members by scourging, and instructing children to read. The dispenser of the alms (welfare officer) received the alms from the synagogue and distributed them. A competent interpreter was required to paraphrase the Torah and the Prophets into other languages, especially the vernacular Aramaic, if needed (5.6.4). A qualified person was also allowed to conduct the service, like Jesus in Luke 4:16-30.

As far as the officials of the synagogue are concerned, they were not restricted to a particular group of people or socio-religious set of people. In principle, anybody was in position to head the institution as long the person had the necessary expertise as a result of their experience and knowledge of the liturgical issues and possibly their priestly heritage. Priests may have played an essential role regarding religious matters. However, it should be noted that leadership in the synagogue was not hereditary but open and democratic in certain times and places, especially

¹⁵¹ An example of this can be seen in Luke 4:16ff.

in the Second Temple period (Levine 2005:2). According to Levine (2005:2), the most distinctive aspect of the synagogue was its communal nature in that the congregation, and not just a few priests (like in the Temple), participated in almost all the synagogue rituals, including reading or reciting prayers. This practice was quite different to the system of worship in the Jerusalem Temple, where people remained passive when entering the Temple for worship, not even seeing how the sacrifices were carried out unless they themselves had the privilege of performing it. In some instances, guests sat in the women's law court and were not able to see what was happening in the inner Israelite or priestly courts. Furthermore, in the Jerusalem Temple, non-Jews were barred from the area under penalty of death. However, the synagogue, with its inclusive nature, was open to all people, and in the Diaspora in many places a good number of non-Jews attended the synagogue regularly. In line with this, one may be right to say that the synagogue was transformative in terms of participation, location, worship and leadership, since it did not limit itself to a particular place or group of people.

It is clear from the previous section that this study answered the first research question about what role the synagogue played in addressing the needs of different communities in Judaism.

Chapter Three examined the synagogue and its function in the New Testament. In the gospels (3.2) the synagogue is depicted as a Jewish institution which was often linked with the Sabbath and was concerned principally with acts of teaching, preaching, healing and punishment. It was also understood to be a place of prayer, reading of the Prophets, and almsgiving. It is noteworthy that some synagogues were apparently built by non-Jews.

Interestingly, the Pauline epistles make no explicit mention of synagogues, though it is implied where teaching and preaching are referred to (3.3). Paul's charge to the Corinthian church in Corinthians 6:1-7 to settle their legal affairs within their assembly also reflects a similar practice in the synagogue (2.7.8). The collection of offerings from the gentile churches for the mother church in Jerusalem also resembled the sending of envoys bearing the temple tax from the synagogues (Diaspora) to Jerusalem (2.7.7).

It was furthermore apparent from the survey of the synagogue in the New Testament that the various authors viewed the synagogue differently. In James the term synagogue is used, uniquely in the New Testament, for a Christian assembly (3.4) while in Revelation (3.5) a controversial phrase is used for a group in the church who are described as a "synagogue of Satan". This phrase in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 refers to people who claim to be Jews but are not.

They were instead a “synagogue of Satan” because they rejected the plan of God for salvation through Christ and sided with the Roman authorities to persecute the church. However, as far as the study of the synagogue in the New Testament is concerned, and as already established above, this aligns with some practices of the synagogue already noted in Chapter Two in terms of teaching and preaching, which can be understood as exposition of Scripture and punishment.

In line with the constructive, analytical and comparative approaches as identified by Theissen (1.7.1.2), the analysis undertaken in 3.6 makes it clear that the manner in which the New Testament describes the synagogue and its relationship with the early followers of Jesus, reflects the relationship between the various groups of Jesus followers and the Jewish synagogues in their specific socio-historical situations. The New Testament does not present an objective history of the synagogue in the 1st century. Instead, it reflects the complicated history of the relationship between the early church and the synagogue. The study has also shown that the role of the synagogue evident in the New Testament resembles to a certain extent the rule of the synagogue as discussed in Chapter Two (2.7).

Chapter Four attended to the socio-historical background of Luke-Acts in terms of its authorship, the unity of Luke-Acts, the occasion and its purpose, its date and the literary context. This was done according to the constructive approach identified by Theissen (1977:3; 1992:36), which studies the social circumstances from which a text emanates by studying what is known of the group it was created in. The aim of Chapter Four was to attempt to place Luke-Acts within its socio-historical context in order to study its depiction of the synagogue in Chapter Five.

The chapter used a constructive approach to provide a description of the socio-historical context of Luke-Acts. Chapter Four concluded that Luke and Acts must be studied as one narrative which provides a significant part of the New Testament’s description of the ministry of both Jesus and the early church. It also proposed that Luke in general provides a trustworthy account of the practices of the early church. The chapter confirmed that the literary placement of the beginning of Jesus’ and Paul’s ministries in synagogues indicate the importance of the synagogue as a locale for ministry. The choice of synagogues as the locales for their ministries does not appear to have been incidental, but indicates that, according to Luke, both Jesus and Paul initially sought to engage with various Jewish communities in order to call them to accept their message and thereby transform their ministries. Especially Luke 4:16-30 can be

understood as a clear indication of what Jesus' ministry would be about (proclaiming the good news of the favourable year of the Lord) and who it would focus on (the poor).

Chapter Five focussed on the synagogue according to Luke's understanding of Jesus' and Paul's engagement with the synagogue by undertaking a socio-historical study of the synagogue in Luke-Acts in general and Luke 4:16-30 in particular. Luke-Acts is the primary text of this research since it contains more material on the synagogue than any other book in the New Testament. Of the 56 references to the synagogue in the New Testament, Luke-Acts contains 35. This justifies the treatment of the synagogue in Luke-Acts in a separate chapter. The study showed that both Jesus and Paul used the synagogue as a locale for preaching the message of the kingdom. Luke shows that it was the custom of both Jesus and Paul to attend the synagogue, however, both were rejected and driven out of the synagogue, with Paul resorting to using the household as alternative locale for preaching.

The socio-historical study further attested to the fact that the synagogue in Luke 4:16-30 was a public one which was open to all people. This implies that the message of Jesus was for the whole community and likewise his rejection was also by the entire community. A case was therefore made that, according to Luke, both Jesus and Paul were attempting to transform communities by challenging them in their decision-making institution, the public synagogue. It can thus be concluded that the thesis (1.3.3) that this study investigated that the start of the ministry of Jesus and Paul in a synagogue at the beginning of their respective ministries in Luke-Acts was for a strategic purpose rather than simply a practical one, and that according to the author Jesus wanted to align the audience in the synagogue with his message of good news for the poor.

Chapter Five answered the second research question, whether Jesus' beginning of his ministry in Luke 4:16-30 clarified the intent of his mission as well as how he intended to accomplish it. Jesus wanted to transform the people of God and the society they lived in so that the needs of the poor were addressed. He wanted to accomplish this not by starting a war with the Romans, but by calling on the various Jewish communities to accept his message (5.11.1). In Luke Jesus' proclamation of the good news starts in the public synagogue of Nazareth. After his rejection in his own hometown's synagogue, it appears that the Lukan Jesus broadened his approach to also preach his message in a variety of public and private spaces.

6.3 Summary

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study:

- (a) The study reiterated that the synagogue was an important institution for the Jews in the 1st century.
- (b) The synagogue has a long and varied history that is reflected in the diversity of its architecture, functionaries and functions.
- (c) According to Luke-Acts, as Jews, Jesus and Paul both began their ministry in the synagogue.
- (d) Luke does not provide a comprehensive account of the synagogue as locale for ministry in his time. Luke-Acts does not contain lists of the ministries in the synagogue, or clearly defined roles or titles for the functionaries. According to Luke, neither Jesus nor Paul appeared to attempt to transform the liturgical functions and functionaries of the synagogue by providing a new blueprint for the ministry of the synagogue.
- (e) The same is true for the church; Luke-Acts does not offer a blueprint of the ministry of the church. Instead, Luke describes how the church adapted as an institution for his time, just like the synagogue did.
- (f) According to Luke 4:16-30, in his first engagement with the synagogue, Jesus specifically declares good news to the poor. In Luke's gospel, the theme of caring for the poor is an important one, with several references to the poor. From these references it appears that the community of Luke was comprised of both the poor and the rich (Lk 4:18-19; 6:20; 7:22; 11:39; 12:33; 14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 18:22; 21:3) (Scheffler 2011:117).¹⁵² In Nazareth, Jesus' synagogue sermon is specifically addressed to the poor, the oppressed and the prisoners (Lk 4:17b-19; 7:22). The poor were the economical poor who were vulnerable to imprisonment and all sorts of oppression, and for whom God was their only hope. There were a significant number of poor people in the time of Jesus and Luke-Acts.

¹⁵² Scheffler (2011:117) states that the "concern for the poor is interconnected with other aspects of human dignity and suffering, for example physical and mental illness, social ostracism (women, children, despised professions) and political enmity".

(g) Jesus' sermon in Luke 4:16-30 in a public synagogue and his interpretation of the Isaiah scroll added authority to his message of good news for the poor. This engagement with the audience of the synagogue in Nazareth set the agenda for his ministry (cf. Lk 7:18-23). Jesus' decision to begin his ministry in a synagogue could also have indicated the strategy that he planned to follow to spread his message – going from synagogue to synagogue to convince audiences to align their lives and the ministries of their synagogues with Jesus' message. If this was the case, Jesus' rejection by the attendees of the synagogue in Nazareth (Lk 4:28-30), as well as a synagogue in an unknown location (Lk 6:11), could have prompted him to adapt a new strategy of teaching in desolate (cf. Lk 6:17-49) and private (Lk 9:18) places and sending his disciples to different towns to spread his message (Lk 9:1-6; 10:1-12). While this suggestion of a change in Jesus' strategy, as depicted in Luke's sources, is speculative, it is clear that Luke depicts Jesus' ministry in more than one synagogue as ending in the rejection of his message. According to Luke, Jesus did not succeed in gaining acceptance for his mission from any synagogue.

(h) There are, however, indications that the ministries of various public synagogues in Acts were transformed. In Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37 the disciples of Jesus, for example, appear to make the social needs of the people a priority by ensuring that there is no needy person among them. The collection of offerings from the gentile churches for the needy in the mother church in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1-3; Rom 15:25-27; 2 Cor 8:9) also resembles the sending of envoys bearing the temple tax from the synagogues (Diaspora) to Jerusalem (2.7.7), underlining the fact that their social need was a priority.

(i) It is clear from Luke 4:16-30 that it was the Lukan Jesus' intent to reorder the social order that provided a good life for a few at the expense of the majority. Jesus' and Paul's ministries in the public synagogue can be interpreted as reminding the synagogue what it should have been doing (caring for the poor). The message of Jesus in the synagogue in Luke 4:16-30 suggests a possible failure on the part of the synagogue in his time in discharging its duties to its faith community (including the poor) and that Jesus wanted to attend to the need of the people through the transformation of this specific religio-political institution.

(j) It appears that the Lukan Jesus' strategy for doing this was to transform the ministry of the public synagogue, and that it was not just a convenient place for him to start his ministry but

rather a strategic one. The announcement of Jesus in Luke 4 would have had a different meaning and impact if he had delivered it in an open field (cf. the response to it).

(k) Paul is also presented by Luke as using the synagogue as a starting point for his ministry in the places he visited (Acts 13:4-5; 17:2-3), with the potential and perceived threat of overturning the order of the Roman world (Acts 17:6-7).

(l) According to Luke it was not the intent of Jesus and Paul to replace the synagogue, but rather to transform it as a locale for ministry that addressed the needs of its community in a new way. In view of the varied role synagogues played in addressing the needs of Jewish communities it is clear that the alignment of a public synagogue with the message of Jesus and Paul, as described by Luke, would have had a major transformative effect on the communities in which they were the most important religio-political institutions.

(m) It appears that Jesus' engagement with synagogues was a failure while that of Paul had mixed results. It is noteworthy that Paul, unlike Jesus, did not deviate from his strategy of using public synagogues in the Diaspora as the main locale for his ministry.

(n) There is an overlap and differences between the church and the synagogue in Luke-Acts in terms of function.

(o) The synagogue and the church in the 1st century functioned in a different context to contemporary churches. Contemporary churches can, for example, not address all the needs of a particular community since not all members of a community recognise it as a locale for ministry.

6.4 Possible implications of the study for the church in Nigeria

In the following section the results of the study will be applied to the Nigerian context.

The study of the synagogue in Luke-Acts, and particularly Luke 4:16-30, using a socio-historical study (5.6), showed that the beneficiaries of Jesus' message, while spiritually poor,

were also socially and economically disadvantaged in his society.¹⁵³ They are those Manus (2009:51-2) refers to as the downtrodden, those overburdened by all the miseries of life as they suffered extreme deprivation and affliction due to the greedy elite in their society consuming far more than their share.

While poverty is a major problem in most counties in the world, it is a huge problem in Nigeria. In Africa, where it is seen as the country with the largest economy, Nigeria is poorly ranked in terms of individual wealth (Oshewolo 2010:264). In terms of the size of its population, one can rightly say that Nigeria is in the predicament of being too rich to be poor and, at the same time, too poor to be rich. In the words of Nwaobi (2003:5): “The country is rich, but the people are poor.” Despite the enormous natural resources that the country is blessed with, it has remained poor, with a very low level of social development. Hence Manus (2009:42) calls Nigeria “a world class” poor nation as a recent report indicates that Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with most poor people in the world.

In Nigeria poverty is a reality for millions of people (Ikharehon and Omoregie 2015:98) and according to Anyanwu (1997:3), “... affects many aspects of the human condition, including the physical, moral, and psychological” dimensions. According to a report of the Development Assistance Committee in 2001, poverty can be understood as the denial of people’s food security, health, education, rights and dignity (Oshewolo 2010:265), meaning poverty cannot be viewed from a single perspective. Poverty also leads to criminal acts which the perpetrators may not have engaged in if they had a liveable income. These crimes often result in imprisonment, which only increases their families’ poverty. Even if the poor do not resort to crime, they are often abused by the social system that should protect them. They are forced to work for low wages in circumstances that are often dangerous. Unfortunately, one does not have to look far to see how the poor are mistreated and exploited in Nigeria.

¹⁵³ While the theme of caring for the poor is a strong focus of the ministry of the Lukan Jesus (Lk 4:18-19; 6:20; 7:22; 11:39; 12:33; 14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 18:22; 21:3), his sermon in Nazareth is specifically addressed to the poor and the outcast (Lk 4:18; 7:22), and his ministry, according to Scheffler (2011:117), is interconnected with other aspects of human dignity and suffering, for example physical and mental illness, social ostracism (women, children, despised professions) and political enmity. The Lukan Jesus thus had a broad ministry focussed on the various needs of people, and not just on poverty.

The church must not just institute ministries on a local level which address the needs of the people (though this must also be done). It must challenge the entire socio-economic system itself in the same manner in which the year of favour declared by Jesus was a call to embark on radical transformation of economic, political, cultural and religious structures affected by social injustice.

The Lukan Jesus' decision not to conform to the *status quo*, but to revolutionise the social order of injustices that rendered many people poor, prisoners, oppressed and blind, through the inauguration of the kingdom, must take centre stage for the church and especially for its leaders. Jesus' message in the synagogue must be seen and understood as encouraging Christian communities and organisations to create policies and launch initiatives that can foster social, political, religious, and economic growth, especially in disadvantaged communities.

It would be simplistic to argue that the church in Nigeria should implement the strategy followed by the Lukan Jesus in targeting the "public churches", since the Nigerian context is different from that of Jesus and Luke. Churches in Nigeria are closer to "association" churches, serving the needs of specific communities, than to "public" ones, that can address the need of an entire community. Therefore, an ecumenical approach is needed to affectively address the diverse needs of the faith communities Nigeria. This implies that all Christians need to come together under the umbrella of the Christian Association of Nigeria (representing all the denominations of Christian churches in the country) to address the needs of the Nigerian community. Furthermore, this should include the full diversity of congregations, so that they can address the needs of all in their diverse communities.

6.5 Concluding remarks

While Luke-Acts does not provide the church in Nigeria with a blueprint on how to address the needs of its faith communities, it does remind the church that (a) its various manifestations and congregations are key locales for a ministry that addresses both systematic injustice and local needs; and (b) a strategy is needed. While the strategy of the Lukan Jesus failed, and that of Paul had mixed results according to Acts, it does not detract from the fact that they had a clear strategy in mind that they implemented. Their attempts to address the needs of their

communities in their day was not *ad hoc*. Neither should it be today. As synagogues fulfilled a variety of functions that served its broader community in ancient times, churches today can also have a powerful impact if they align all their ministries to address the needs of the poor as instructed by the Lukan Jesus. If they do this, churches will become a transformative locale for ministry in Nigeria.

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